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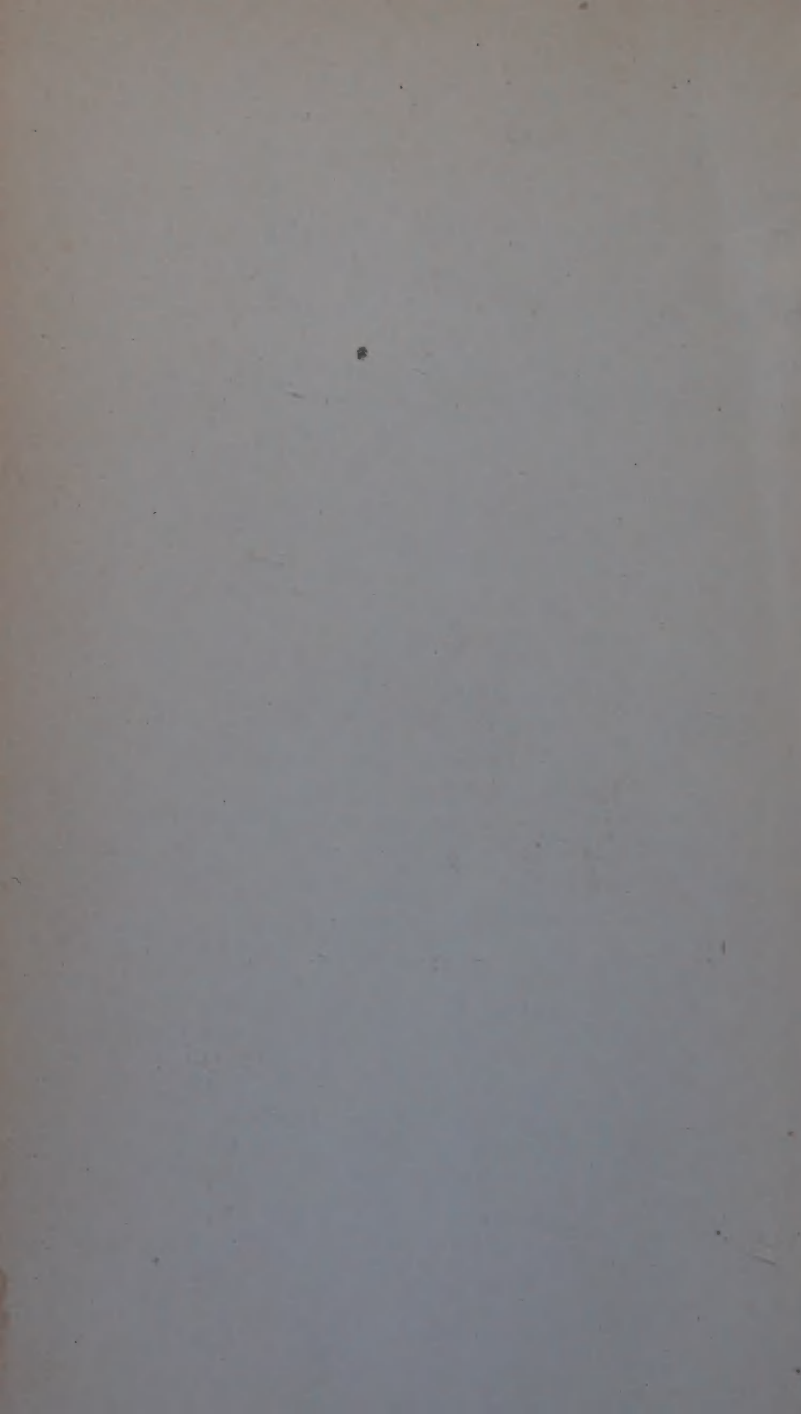


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THE NEW BIBLICAL GUIDE.

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THE NEW BIBLICAL GUIDE

OR
RECENT DISCOVERIES AND
THE BIBLE

VOL. VI.

BY THE
REV. JOHN URQUHART

Author of

*"The Wonders of Prophecy;" "Inspiration and Accuracy of the
Holy Scriptures;" "The Bible, Its Structure and Pur-
pose," Etc. Member of the Society of Biblical
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Victoria Institute.*

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ERRATA.

Page 206, lines 6 and 5 from bottom, for "about 641" read in 639.

Page 354, line 4 from top, for "west" read east.

Page 354, line 8 from top, for "east" read west.

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THE NEW BIBLICAL GUIDE

THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS.

CHAPTER I.

THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE BOOKS OF KINGS.

THE great empires of the East, Assyria, Babylon, and Persia will now, almost exclusively, occupy our attention. They all alike exercised the greatest influence upon the destinies of ancient Israel; and it is among the most welcome surprises of recent times that this long period of Israel's history should now have found such a continuous and marvellous commentary in the recovered records of those great world-kingsdoms.

The confirmations are so numerous and so conclusive that the critics have had to confess that here at least the Bible record must be recognised as history. This has been accompanied also, as we shall see, with the overturn of some of their earlier and most confident conclusions. For, wherever the explorer

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and the discoverer bring back to us the past with which the Bible deals, the critic has to retire confounded and ashamed. But in the period of which we are now to treat there is one vantage ground which they still occupy with their customary scorn. The Assyrians had what appears to have been a most careful system of reckoning. They had official astronomers, who fixed the commencement of each month on the evening when the new moon was first observed. When the moon could not be observed, thirty days were counted from the commencement of the previous month. This gave them six months of twenty-nine days each, and six of thirty days each, and the year thus consisted of 174 days (six by twenty-nine), and 180 days (six by thirty)—in all, 354 days. This is eleven days short of 365, the number of days embraced in our own year, and the difference was, of course, bound in time to put the months out of accord with the seasons. This fact was as well known to them, however, as it is to us, and the necessary correction was provided. The year began with the first new moon before the spring equinox, that is, as the reader is aware, when the length of the day is exactly equal to that of the night. The difference (between this Assyrian calendar year and the real year) of eleven and a-quarter days went on increasing; but, whenever there were more than thirty days between the end of the year and the equinox, they added a month, making thirteen months in all in that year.

This device prevented the reckoning from being

further out of harmony with the seasons than one month. Pains were accordingly taken to mark the length of the day and of the night, so as to distinguish the equinox with certainty. One inscription runs: "On the 6th day of Nisan, the day and night are equal; six kaspu the day, and six kaspu the night." The kaspu equalled two hours. Another inscription says: "On the 15th day of Nisan, the day and night were equal; six kaspu the day, six kaspu the night." "As the Assyrians," says George Smith, "had official astronomers, who observed the heavens and regulated the calendar, they could not be far out in their calculations; probably, one or two days would be the limit of error. On the average, in the Assyrian calendar the year would begin about fourteen days before the vernal equinox, and the fifteenth day of the tenth month would thus be about the longest night. In accordance with this, on one fragment I found a list of the comparative length of the night in an average Assyrian year, and the longest night was fixed in it on the fifteenth day of the tenth month." And he adds: "Among the Assyrians the first twenty-eight days of every month were divided into four weeks of seven days each, the seventh, fourteenth, twenty-first, and twenty-eighth days, respectively, being Sabbaths, and there was a general prohibition of work on these days." *

But care was taken for more than the fixing of the months and of the years. One of the great discoveries made by Sir Henry Rawlinson was that the

* *The Assyrian Eponym Canon*, pp. 19, 20.

years were also arranged so as to admit of their being used for the dating of events. Among the tablets brought to the British Museum from Nineveh were some, more or less imperfect, which gave a list of the years from 911 B.C. to 647 B.C. Each year is named either after the king, or after some leading official of the kingdom. These officials have been called by Assyriologists "Eponyms." In this way the date of an event was fixed by being referred to the eponymy of such and such a personage; and when any one of these dates is fixed, say, by some natural occurrence, we are able to reckon down or up to any year in an Assyrian king's reign. Such a fixed date was supposed to be obtained by a reference to an eclipse, which is mentioned in "the Eponym Canon," as this list has been named.

It is during the very period covered by this Canon that the contact occurs between Assyria and Israel. It will be at once evident, therefore, how important the comparison becomes. And what is the result? Not just yet that perfect accord which we desire to see. The same events are, indeed, noted in both records. The same kings are named. Events and kings occur in the same order. These agreements are of the greatest importance, and prove the absolutely historical character of this part of the Scripture. But *in one period* the dates differ from about eighteen to forty-six years. This has troubled many friends of the Bible, and has rejoiced its foes. But the despondency and the joy are alike premature. The accuracy of the dates fixed from the Assyrian Canon,

and the accuracy of the Canon itself are challenged, as we have already seen, by Professor Oppert, whose authority in a matter of this kind is second to none. I have said that the lack of perfect accord in regard to dates is confined to one period, and that is the period from Shalmaneser II. to Sargon, the father of Sennacherib. From Sargon's time onward (with the exception of Sennacherib's invasion of Judah) the agreement as to dates is absolutely exact. There are various reasons for suspecting the accuracy of the Eponym Canon in those very parts in which the disagreement occurs. I may add, too, that Assyrian dates are not faultless. In his introduction to the translation of the Kurkh inscription of Shalmaneser II. (to whose inscriptions most of these difficulties are due), Professor Sayce writes: "Shalmaneser had a long reign of thirty-five years, during which he came into contact with Ahab, Jehu, Hazael, and other Biblical personages. In accordance with the astronomical system used in Assyria, a sort of jubilee was kept in his thirty-first year, the king 'inaugurating the cycle for the second time' as he tells us in the Black Obelisk inscription. It may be added," he continues, "*that the dates given in the latter inscription do not always agree with those in the one before us*; a fact which illustrates the necessity of critical caution even when we are dealing with contemporary documents." *

We have seen in the last volume how grave the reasons are for doubting the statement that Shalmaneser II. refers to Ahab, of Israel. The Ahab who is

* *Records of the Past*, vol. iii., p. 82.

mentioned there is monarch of "Sirlai" and not of Israel. He is one of twelve princes of the Mediterranean coast who are in closest alliance with the kings of Damascus; and (a fact of the utmost importance in this question) the twelve kings are still in league with Damascus *after the death* of Ahab of Israel. And this is not a matter of chronology merely. If the Israelitish king was so long and so closely leagued with Damascus, the Bible history would require to be re-written; for, save in one brief period only, there was long enduring and fierce antagonism between the two countries.

With the removal of this identification of Ahab of Sirlai with Ahab of Israel, the most serious difficulty disappears, and the rest will doubtless follow as fuller attention is devoted to this subject. There are serious doubts regarding the Assyrian lists which have yet to be cleared away. The system of reckoning followed in Assyria was similar to that adopted in Rome, the chief difference being that, while there were *two* consuls chosen yearly in Rome, only *one* eponym was elected annually in Assyria. But Eponyms no more than other people are able to live for ever; and when an Eponym died during his year of office, did he and his successor occupy only one year between them? That is a question which cannot be yet answered. There were other irregularities doubtless, just as there were with the Roman Consuls. In Rome there were changes in the date of election, for example. The time was altered from September to March, and then from March to January. In seasons

of tumult, too, the Romans suspended the election of Consuls, and adopted another arrangement. There were tumults enough in Assyria, and one is led to ask whether the Assyrians were able at such times to carry on orderly arrangements which were found to be impossible at Rome.

These are questions which further research will probably answer; but until they are answered it is much too soon to commence correcting the chronology of the Bible by the Assyrian Eponym Canon. Bible students have also something to do meanwhile. For though we have in the Scriptures a carefully kept record of the reigns of the kings, it is by no means certain that we understand as fully as we might do the Bible chronology. For one thing we have proved ourselves unworthy of such illumination. Bible students have been impatient and wayward, suspicious and contemptuous. There are, to be sure, difficulties in the numbers. But the real student will be slow to rush to the conclusion that, because everything is not clear to him, somebody must have blundered. And yet that has been the course almost universally pursued. It is said that those who copied the ancient manuscripts have made mistakes; and that, indeed, the mistakes have been so serious and so numerous that no reliance can be placed upon the figures as we now have them. That is a conclusion which carries its own refutation upon the face of it. For, if there had been such carelessness displayed in the copying of the numbers, it must have left its mark upon the rest of the text as well. But the text is

one which we have no reason to question. The supposition is, besides, an unworthy accusation against a body of transcribers who have proved themselves the most scrupulously faithful copyists that the world has ever seen.

That the numbers have not suffered in this serious fashion is proved by the following table of the reigns of the kings of Judah and of Israel:—

KINGS OF JUDAH.

Rehoboam	...	reigns 17 years	1 Kings xiv. 21.
Abijam	...	reigns 3 years	„ xv. 2.
Asa	...	reigns 41 years	„ xv. 10.
Jehoshaphat	...	reigns 25 years	„ xxii. 42.
Joram	...	reigns 8 years	2 Kings viii. 17.
Ahaziah	...	reigns 1 year	„ viii. 26.
Athaliah	...	reigns 6 years	„ xi. 3.
Joash	...	reigns 40 years	„ xii. 1.
Amaziah	...	reigns 29 years	„ xiv. 2.
Uzziah	...	reigns 52 years	„ xv. 2.
Jotham	...	reigns 16 years	„ xv. 33.
Ahaz	...	reigns 16 years	„ xvi. 2.
Hezekiah, till end of Hosea of Israel's reign...	}	6 years	„ xviii. 1.

260 years.

KINGS OF ISRAEL.

Jeroboam I.	...	reigned 22 years	1 Kings xiv. 20.
Nadab	...	reigned 2 years	„ xv. 25.
Baasha	...	reigned 24 years	„ xv. 33.
Elah	...	reigned 2 years	„ xvi. 8.
Zimri	...	reigned 7 days	„ xvi. 15.

KINGS OF ISRAEL (*Continued*).

Omri ...	... reigned 12 years	1 Kings xvi. 23.
Ahab ...	... reigned 22 years	„ xvi. 29.
Ahaziah	... reigned 2 years	„ xxii. 51.
Joram ...	... reigned 12 years	2 Kings iii. 1.
Jehu ...	... reigned 28 years	„ x. 36.
Jehoahaz	... reigned 17 years	„ xiii. 1.
Jehoash	... reigned 16 years	„ xiii. 10.
Jeroboam II. ...	... reigned 41 years	„ xiv. 23.
Zachariah	... reigned 6 months	„ xv. 8.
Shallum	... reigned 1 month	„ xv. 13.
Menahem	... reigned 10 years	„ xv. 17.
Pekahiah	... reigned 2 years	„ xv. 23.
Pekah ...	... reigned 20 years	„ xv. 27.
Hosea ...	... reigned 9 years	„ xvii. 1.

241 years, 7 months, and
7 days.

There is thus a difference of only some eighteen years between the total of the reigns of the kings of Israel from Jeroboam to Hosea and the total of the reigns of the kings of Judah during the same period. When we remember that there were plainly occasional intervals of confusion in Israel, between the death of one king and the commencement of his successor's reign, we shall admit that the eighteen years of difference are largely accounted for. The whole subject is one which, as has been already said, demands the attention of some capable student; but, meanwhile, these totals are enough to convince us that no serious error has crept into the text; and the

small differences which exist (within a limited area) between the statements of the Assyrian monuments and the Bible dates may be confidently expected to disappear with fuller knowledge, as so many other difficulties have disappeared already. Fuller knowledge has always justified the Bible, as we shall now see in the chapters that are to follow, and in the chronology also triumphs await us.

CHAPTER II.

ASSYRIA AND ISRAEL.

THE Book of Second Kings has been much more extensively confirmed and illustrated through recent research than any other Book of the Old Testament. One indication of this is that much more than one-third of Schrader's two volumes, *The Cuneiform Inscriptions and the Old Testament* (Second Edition), is occupied with this Book alone. This is due to the fact that the annals of Assyria and of Babylon, covering the same period as 2 Kings, have been so largely recovered. Light has poured in from the monuments of those two great empires, and in that light we note, with grateful astonishment, how one unexpected confirmation after another shows us the absolute fidelity and the minute accuracy of the sacred history. In that light, indeed, even the silence of the Scripture becomes another proof of its reliability;

for we see that in the record of those periods in which mention is made of neither Assyria nor of Babylon, it is because these empires had not come into contact with Israel or Judah.

The lesson taught by this ought to be heeded and remembered. We have less confirmation of other parts of the Old Testament history, because we have less information regarding the countries and the times with which the Scripture narrative deals. But wherever the curtain is lifted, we see the very things chronicled in the Bible. Could there be any fuller proof of its reliability? Where light breaks in from other sources, the Scripture is shown to be utterly trustworthy. Even those slight difficulties that remained have been disappearing one after another as research has furnished more exact information. And where proof of the correctness of the Scripture from outside sources, is wanting, it is because these are still wrapped in darkness. The witnesses are dumb and cannot answer our questions. But wherever they have spoken, they have confirmed the Bible.

This is triumphantly illustrated in the confirmations of 2 Kings. There is still a slight difference, as we have just seen, between the earlier Assyrian dates and those of the Bible. But "generally speaking," writes Colonel Conder, "there is not more than ten years' difference between the modern calculation of Bible dates and the modern calculation of those noticed in Assyrian records. The supposed notice of Ahab is abandoned, yet the Moabite Stone shows us that he had reigned in the period mentioned in the

Bible. Ahabu of Sirlai, in Syria, was once hastily assumed to be Ahab of Israel; but this is impossible, and the first king who actually met the Assyrians appears to have been Jehu of Israel."*

Before referring to the Assyrian record of Jehu's tribute, let us mark the significant silence of the earlier Scripture record regarding Assyria. From the founding of the Israelitish kingdom, about 1095 B.C., till the days of Menahem king of Israel, about 772 B.C., no mention is made of Assyria (2 Kings xv. 19, 20). Thus, for a period of more than 320 years, it is implied that this great empire has been kept outside the territory of Israel and of Judah. Expedition after expedition (as we now learn from the Assyrian monuments) has passed out from Nineveh and thrown itself against the countries of the west, like wave following wave in the advancing sweep of a mighty tide. But God has been a wall round His erring people. The waters have broken harmlessly in the distance, and Israel has only heard the sound of the onset. And nothing is said of Assyria in the Scripture, because God forbore as yet to use this rod of His anger. Now, is there any proof that Israel and Judah did enjoy this long respite? Is this silence regarding Assyria an exact reflection of the history of the times?

The response to this is full and clear. Assyria for long made no lasting conquests in the west. She fought battles, took cities, visited the temporarily-subdued districts with fearful punishments, and carried away spoil; but so soon as her armies turned home-

* *The Bible and the East*, p. 149.

ward, the gates of the countries were, so to say, closed behind them. Each subsequent expedition had to repeat the experiences of the preceding, and to fight its way from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean. "The inscription of Panammu I., recently found at Samala, shows us that native Syrian princes were still independent of Assyria about the close of the ninth century B.C.; but about 745 B.C. Assurnirari II. advanced on Aleppo and on Arpad, and the conquest of Syria was only delayed by revolution in Assyria itself."* This was the beginning of the end; but the end itself did not fully come, as the silence of the Scripture indicates, till nearly the close of the eighth century B.C.

In another matter the Bible account has been strikingly verified. Damascus is represented in the Books of Kings as a strong, warlike, active, and daring kingdom. We have already had occasion to note this fact, but it is one the importance of which in this controversy, as to the historical character of the Old Testament, cannot well be over-estimated. Damascus is the dread of Israel in the days of Omri and of Ahab. Hazael, the contemporary of Jehu, who usurps the throne, gives Israel no rest. He conquered their entire territory on the east of the Jordan. "In those days the Lord began to cut Israel short: and Hazael smote them in all the coasts of Israel; from Jordan eastward, all the land of Gilead, the Gadites, and the Reubenites, and the Manassites, from Aroer which is by the river Arnon, even Gilead

* *The Bible and the East*, p. 152.

and Bashan" (2 Kings x. 32, 33). Hazael carried his victorious arms as far as the south of Philistia, and even threatened Jerusalem so seriously that the king of Judah and his nobles prevailed upon Hazael to pass by only through the surrender of the spoil which he had hoped to capture. "Then Hazael king of Syria went up, and fought against Gath, and took it: and Hazael set his face to go up to Jerusalem. And Jehoash king of Judah took all the hallowed things that Jehoshaphat, and Jehoram, and Ahaziah, his fathers, kings of Judah, had dedicated, and his own hallowed things, and all the gold that was found in the treasures of the house of the Lord, and in the king's house, and sent it to Hazael king of Syria: and he went away from Jerusalem" (2 Kings xii. 17, 18).

Here we have an eminently strong power. Was this, then, the actual position of Damascus in the latter half of the ninth century B.C.? Was it really the leading kingdom west of the Euphrates? The inscriptions of Shalmaneser II., king of Assyria, have amply confirmed the statements of the Bible, and have shown us the very same kingdom and the same king with whom the Bible has so long made us familiar. Hazael is mentioned in the inscriptions as Hazailu of Imirisu, the Assyrian name for that portion of Syria which formed the kingdom of Damascus. "In the eighteenth year of my reign," says Shalmaneser II., "I crossed the Euphrates the sixteenth time, Hazael of Damascus advanced to battle against me; 1,121 of his chariots, 470 litters with his camp I took from him." Again: "In the twenty-first year of my reign

I crossed the Euphrates the twenty-first time; against the cities of Hazael of the country of Damascus I marched; four of his cities I captured." In a fragment of another inscription by the same king, Shalmaneser II., we meet this fuller notice of the campaign first mentioned: "In the eighteenth year of my reign I crossed the Euphrates the sixteenth time. Hazael of Damascus trusted in the multitude of his troops, assembled his hosts without number, and made the mountain Sanir, the summit of the mountains which are opposite the Lebanon-Mountain, his fortress. With him I contended, inflicted on him a defeat; 16,000 of his warriors I overpowered with weapons; 1,121 of his chariots, 470 of his horsemen (litters), together with his stores (camp), I took from him; to save his life, he took himself off, I pursued him. In Damaskus, his royal city, I besieged him; his plantations I destroyed."*

The reader will note the "hosts without number" and "the multitude of his troops." Hazael brings into the field an army which vastly outnumbers that of Assyria. A predecessor of Hazael's had to strengthen himself with a strong confederacy of twelve neighbouring kings before he could meet the Assyrian armies. But Hazael himself is apparently strong enough to bar Shalmaneser's way single-handed. This defeat must, however, have weakened his power; and the subsequent conflict in which several towns were captured, and when Hazael himself seems to have secured peace only by payment of tribute,

* Schrader, *The Cuneiform Inscriptions and the Old Testament*, vol. i., pp. 200, 201

would, we are ready to think, have confined him to his own territories. But what, then, of his activity in the south at an evidently later period, when Gath was taken and Jerusalem was threatened? The explanation is found in the Assyrian annals. The hammer of this eastern power was smiting in other quarters, and Syria had rest for a season. "The remainder of his (Shalmaneser's) reign," says Maspero, "was passed almost entirely in expeditions against the north (of Mesopotamia) and against the east. . . . Then came old age, and with it its infirmities. The old king, worn out by so many campaigns, quitted the field, and left the command to his generals. Assur-danipal, his eldest son, found that he had lived too long, and raised against him more than half of his empire. Asshur, Amid, Arbela, and twenty-four other cities participated in the rebellion: Kalah and Nineveh remained faithful. Shalmaneser abdicated in favour of his second son, Shamshiramân. In less than four years the revolt was quelled; Assurdanipal was slain, and Shalmaneser had at least the consolation of dying in peace after a reign of thirty-five years."* This gave ample space for the repairing of Hazael's losses and for the renewed extension of his conquests.

The monument on which these notices of Hazael are found is a small obelisk of black marble. It "is five feet in height," and was "found by Mr. Layard in the centre of the Mound at Nimroud, and" is "now in the British Museum. Each of its four sides is

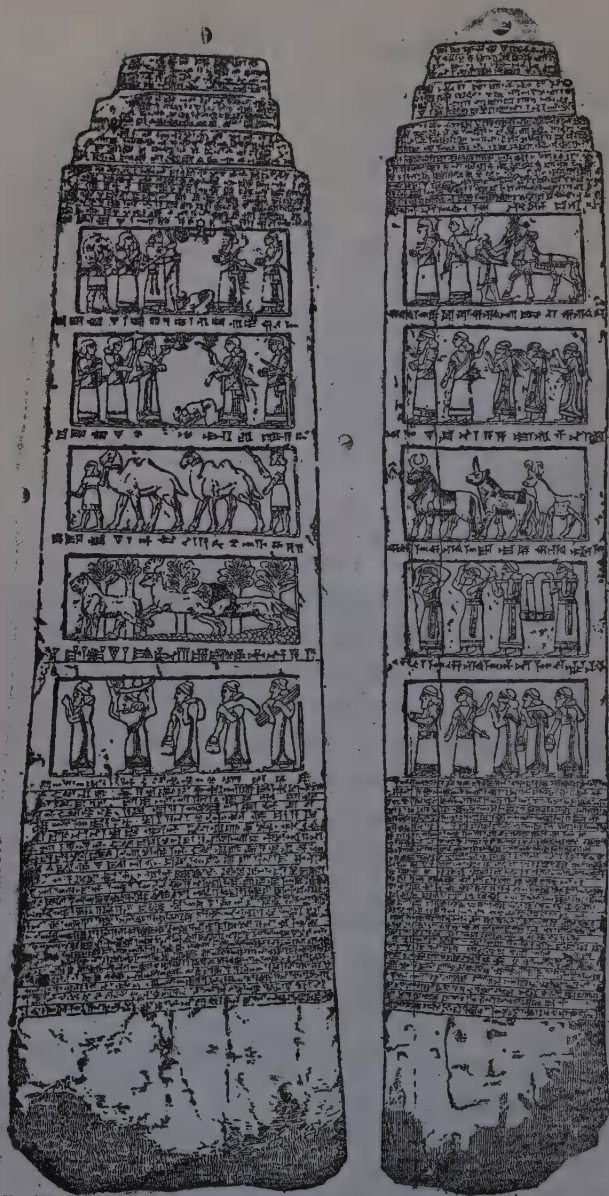
* *Histoire Ancienne des Peuples de L'Orient*, p. 382.

Assyria and Israel.

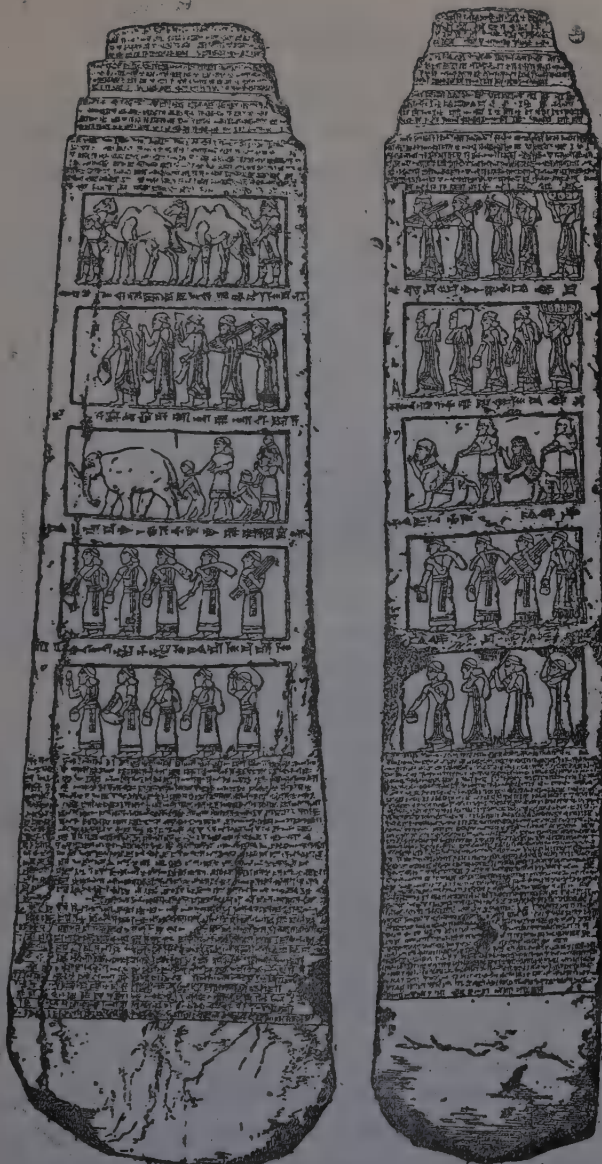
divided into five compartments of sculpture, representing the tribute brought to the Assyrian king by vassal princes, Jehu of Israel being among the number. Shalmaneser, whose annals and conquests are recorded upon it, was the son of Assur-natsir-pal, and died in 823 B.C., after a reign of thirty-five years. A translation of the inscription was one of the first achievements of Assyrian decipherment, and was made by Sir H. Rawlinson; and Dr. Hincks shortly afterwards (in 1851) succeeded in reading the name of Jehu in it.* This inscription, containing the first-known mention of an Israelitish king on the Assyrian monuments, will naturally be regarded with special interest by our readers; and I, therefore, give a representation of each of its four sides. The reference to Jehu is contained in the description of one of the scenes pictured on the obelisk. The tribute-bearers are shown in the sculpture, preceded by a prince or ambassador, who kneels before the king; and there we read these words: "I have received the tribute of Jehu the son of Omri: silver, gold, bowls of gold, chalices of gold, cups of gold, pails of gold, lead, sceptres for the hand of the king, (and) spear shafts." This tribute of Jehu's is mentioned once again on the fragment already referred to; but the mention of it is very brief. He merely says: "At that time I received the tribute of the Tyrians, Sidonians, of Jehu son of Omri."

And here the silence of the inscription is quite as significant as its speech. The record of the tribute

* Professor Sayce, *Records of the Past*, vol. v., pp. 27, 28.



OBELISK OF SHALMANESER II. (TWO SIDES).



OBELISK OF SHALMANESER II. (REMAINING TWO SIDES).

is there; but there is no notice of any invasion of Israel, or of any threatened invasion of it. Jehu has evidently sent tribute, not because he was either conquered or had been threatened by Assyria. We are, therefore, shut up to the conclusion that for some purpose or other he sought the favour and the protection of Assyria. Jehu, with his bowls, and chalices, and cups of gold, was paying the price of an advantage which he wished to gain. This agrees thoroughly with Jehu's position as we see it in the Bible. Israel had as yet no need to dread the approach of Assyria; but to gain Assyria's help against Hazael of Damascus was of the first importance in the eyes of Jehu and of the Israelitish statesmen of the period. There was an arm on which they might have leaned. But God's help was apparently not to be thought of; and so they leaned upon this reed of Assyria, which, so far as that hope of theirs was concerned, only broke and pierced them.

CHAPTER III.

JEHU'S DYNASTY.

THE doom upon Jezebel and her seed, which had been pronounced by Elijah (1 Kings xxi. 19-24), seemed to linger. Ahab was succeeded first by one

son and then by a second. This last had reigned twelve years before the judgment fell; but, when it did fall, not one trait in that terrible prophetic picture failed to find its accomplishment in the awful tragedy. To Jehu, who had been the appointed instrument of the Divine vengeance, the Divine message came: "Because thou hast done well in executing that which is right in Mine eyes, and hast done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in Mine heart, thy children of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel" (2 Kings x. 30).

But there were limits to Jehu's obedience. He extirpated the Baal worshippers and cleansed the land from this open apostasy; but, like Jeroboam, he judged it to be impolitic to turn the attention of the tribes to Jerusalem. The ordinances of the Law were, therefore, not restored to Israel, and the abominations of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin, were continued for the same reason which led to their institution. This defiance of God bore the usual fruit of national weakness and disaster. We have already seen how Hazael of Damascus "cut Israel short," and "smote them in all the coasts of Israel," even in the days of Jehu. But in the days of Jehoahaz his son, matters went from bad to worse. "And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and He delivered them into the hand of Hazael king of Syria, and into the hand of Ben-hadad the son of Hazael, all their days. And Jehoahaz besought the Lord, and the Lord hearkened unto him: for He saw the oppression of Israel, be-

cause the king of Syria oppressed them. (And the Lord gave Israel a saviour, so that they went out from under the hand of the Syrians: and the children of Israel dwelt in their tents, as beforetime. Nevertheless they departed not from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, who made Israel to sin, but walked therein: and there remained the grove also"—the Asherah—the idolatrous worship of "the Queen of heaven"—"in Samaria.) Neither did he leave of the people to Jehoahaz but fifty horsemen, and ten chariots, and ten thousand footmen; for the king of Syria had destroyed them, and had made them like the dust by threshing" (2 Kings xiii. 3-7).

A question has long ago been raised by Assyriologists as to who the saviour was who was raised up in answer to the prayer of Jehoahaz; and, knowing that Assyria was at this time the one conquering power in this region, it was natural that Schrader should come to the conclusion that Israel's saviour was an Assyrian king—Adad-nirari, the grandson of Shalmaneser II., to whom Jehu had paid tribute, and who again invaded the west. In an inscription found at Calah, in which he seems to recount the whole of his conquests, he says: "From the Euphrates, the land of Hatti (Heth, the Hittites), the land of Amurri (Amoria, the Amorites), to its whole extent, the land of Tyre, the land of Sidon, the land of Humri (Omri, Israel), the land of Edom, the land of Palastu (Philistia), as far as the great sea of the setting of the sun (the Mediterranean), I caused to submit to my feet, I fixed tax and tribute

upon them. I went to the land of the Sa-imēri-su (Syria of Damascus); Mari'u, king of Sa-imēri-su, I shut up in Damasqu (Damascus), his royal city. The fear and terror of Assur, his lord, struck him, and he took my feet, performed homage. Two thousand three hundred talents of silver, twenty talents of gold, 3,000 talents of bronze, 5,000 talents of iron, cloth, variegated stuffs, linen, a couch of ivory, an inlaid litter of ivory, (with) cushions (?), his goods, his property, to a countless amount I received in Damascus, his royal city, in the midst of his palace. All the kings of the land of Kaldū (the Chaldean tribes in Babylonia) performed homage, tax and tribute for future days I fixed upon them. Babylon, Borsippa, Cuthah, brought the overplus (of the treasures) of Bel, Nebo, (and) Nergal (made) pure offerings." . . . The translation ends there; "the remainder of the inscription is said," adds Dr. Pinches, "to be still at Calah, not yet uncovered."*

Now, when did this conquest of Damascus take place? Just in this part of the records lies the difference between the dates indicated in the Scripture and those of the Assyrian monuments, according to the edition furnished to us by Sennacherib. It would only mislead us to quote these dates. But they are of special use in one way: they show us the interval between Jehu's tribute to Shalmaneser and this humbling of the kingdom of Damascus. According to the Assyrian reckoning

*Dr. Pinches, *The Old Testament*, etc., p. 341.

Jehu paid his first tribute to			
Shalmaneser in	...	...	842
And his grandson Adad-nirari III.			
began to reign in	...	...	812
The interval, therefore, between his			
ascension and Jehu's tribute is	—		
			30 years.

One thing now remains to determine the interval. In what year of his reign did Adad-nirari conquer Damascus? If that were known, we should only have to add it to the thirty years in order to know the exact period. But this Assyriology cannot yet tell us. George Smith was of opinion that it must have occurred somewhat late in his reign—about fifteen years after his accession. This would make the entire interval between the tribute and the humbling of Damascus forty-five years. George Smith's date, however, was based upon a misreading of a word in the inscription, and, says Dr. Pinches, "it is more probable that the expedition to the Holy Land and Syria took place either in 806, when he went to Arpad, 805, when he was at Haza, or 804, when he marched against Baali, the name, apparently, of a Phœnician city. The next year he went to the sea-coast; but whether this was the Mediterranean or not is not indicated, though it may be regarded as very probable, and if so, 803 B.C. must be added to the dates already named, or the operations to which he refers in his slab-inscription may have extended over one or more of the years here referred to." *

* *The Old Testament, etc.*, p. 340.

This would limit the interval to thirty-six or thirty-nine years. Now, to see what this exactly means in its bearing upon the Scripture history, we have to attend for a moment or two to the Scripture figures.

Jehu reigned altogether	28 years (2 Kings x. 36).
Jehoahaz, his son	... 17 years (2 Kings xiii. 1).

In all 45 years.

We do not know in what year of his reign Jehu paid tribute. It is natural to suppose that it could not have been done quite at the beginning of his reign, for the incursions of Hazael were sent as a punishment for unfaithfulness which did not so much mark the opening years. If we say that it was in the fifteenth or twentieth year, the interval between the tribute and the death of Jehoahaz, his son, will be thirty or twenty-five years.

The meaning of this will now be plain when we notice two things. (1) Hazael's son, Ben-hadad, is reigning *after the death of Jehoahaz*; and (2) he is *not* reigning when Adad-nirari enters Damascus. The king whom he finds there is named Mari'u. Consequently, this Assyrian monarch cannot have been the saviour whom the Lord raised up for Israel. For that saviour must have done his work during Ben-hadad's life-time. Adad-nirari's inscription bears, indeed, its tribute of confirmation; but that tribute is not laid down here. The Scripture notice of the deliverance seems to refer to what it is about to tell us in the account of the interview between the son

of Jehoahaz and Elisha. The prayer of Jehoahaz was heard, but it was not answered then. The deliverance came through his son, but it was not a full deliverance, nor a complete breaking of the Syrian yoke. It was still true that Hazael and Benhadad oppressed Israel all their days.

King Jehoash received tidings of Elisha's sickness, and seems to have hastened to visit the dying prophet. It was a visit of evident affection; for, if tears tell us anything, the king mourns with deep sincerity the loss which he and the country are about to sustain in the death of God's servant. Probably he had seen the seal of death on the prophet's face; "And Joash the king of Israel came down unto him, and wept over his face, and said, O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof." It was a delicate allusion to his passing away; for these had been Elisha's own words when in his anguish he looked up after the ascending Elijah. The prophet was moved; and, no doubt, lifted up his touched heart in prayer to God. He himself had received a blessing, the memory of which these words recalled. Was there no blessing for the king? The answer came that he should receive a blessing; but, as in his own case, it is a blessing which will be according to faith. "And Elisha said unto him, Take bow and arrows. And he took unto him bow and arrows. And he said to the king of Israel, Put thine hand upon the bow. And he put his hand upon it: and Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands. And he said, Open the window eastward. And he opened it. Then

Elisha said, Shoot. And he shot. And he said, The arrow of the Lord's deliverance, even the arrow of deliverance from Syria: for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou have consumed them. And he said, Take the arrows. And he took them. And he said unto the king of Israel, Smite upon the ground. And he smote thrice, and stayed. And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it: whereas thou shalt smite Syria but thrice" (xiii. 14-19).

This prediction was fulfilled. The Scripture again tells us (verses 22-25) that "Hazael king of Syria oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz;" but, it adds: "The Lord was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast them out from His presence as yet. So Hazael king of Syria died; and Ben-hadad his son reigned in his stead. And Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz took again out of the hand of Ben-hadad the son of Hazael the cities, which he had taken out of the hand of Jehoahaz his father by war. Three times did Joash beat him, and recovered the cities of Israel." Jehoash seems, therefore, to have been the saviour of Israel at this time, and not Assyria. But the inscription of Adad-nirari is, nevertheless, confirmatory of the Scripture. The interval between the tribute-giving of Jehu and the Assyrian king's presence in Damascus was somewhere between thirty-six and forty-five years. This carries us

down into the reign of Jehoash. Now, it is plain that the Damascus which Adad-nirari encounters *is not the Damascus of Hazael*. That Syrian king was able to meet the Assyrian army with a countless host, and to present such resistance as made a descent upon Damascus on the part of the Assyrians impossible. But now the Assyrian king is in Mariu's palace, dictating his terms, and gathering the spoils. What has happened in the interval? What has broken Syria's strength? Turn to the Scripture, and all is explained. Israel, whom Ben-hadad had despised, scattered his hitherto victorious hosts to the winds. Three times these are visited with a signal overthrow; and, had not Israel's triumphs ended there, Syria would, according to the prophet's words, have been "consumed." Ben-hadad left a shattered kingdom to his successor. The old resistance was no longer possible, and the tents of Assyria were pitched among the groves of Damascus.

Jehoash reigned sixteen years, and Jeroboam II., his son, forty-one years (2 Kings xiv. 23). Under him Israel once more extended her boundaries. "He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which He spake by the hand of His servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was of Gath-hepher. For the Lord saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter: for there was not any shut up, nor any left, nor any helper for Israel" (verses 25, 26). The Scripture also mentions "how he recovered Damascus and Hamath,

which belonged to Judah, for Israel" (verse 28). And what now of Assyria? Under the watchful eye of that ambitious empire, and with her armies sweeping over these lands in one devastating wave after another, was it possible for the Israelitish king to possess himself of Hamath and of Damascus, and to extend so enormously the frontiers of Israel? Here, again, the Assyrian records enable us to reply. During the thirty years which followed the reign of Adad-nirari, says Maspero, "the power of Assyria fell almost as rapidly as it had risen."* A succession of weak monarchs, and a series of insurrections within their own dominions, kept the Assyrian armies far from Syria and Palestine; and here again the historical character of this Second Book of Kings shows itself in an account which implies the very state of things which we now know to have prevailed in the great empire of the East.

CHAPTER IV.

PUL, KING OF ASSYRIA.

JEROBOAM II. closed his long reign of forty-one years, and apparently left the land of Israel in the enjoyment of unwonted prosperity. But it was the brightness of a setting sun; and we have now to peruse the story of that succession of judgments under which the kingdom of the ten tribes finally succumbed.

* *Ancienne Histoire*, p. 385.

Jeroboam was succeeded by his son Zachariah, who after a brief reign of six months, perished in a conspiracy.

The story of the declining kingdom will come before us immediately. Meanwhile, another matter demands our attention. We are told, in chapter xv. 19, that a certain "Pul, king of Assyria," came against the land of Israel while Menahem was reigning, and that Menahem paid him the large sum of 1,000 talents of silver. A very few years afterwards, in the reign of Pekah, a king of Assyria named Tiglath-pileser leads away captive the two and a-half tribes on the east of the Jordan. Round these names, and very specially round the former of them, a warm controversy was not long ago waged, the conclusion of which has lessons of the utmost moment for the scholars of to-day.

This king of Assyria is the first who is mentioned by his name in the Scripture, and the name was a heavy trouble to learned commentators, Biblical scholars, and believing archæologists. Tiglath-pileser's name was indeed found, and inscriptions of his were recovered. These showed that he had intimate relations with the Israel of that time. They contain, as we shall see in the next chapter, the names of Menahem and of Pekah, kings of Israel, and of Azariah, the contemporary king of Judah. That placed it beyond doubt that Tiglath-pileser was the king who then sat upon the throne of Assyria. But who was Phul, or Pul? Were there *two* kings at that time in Assyria? There was no trace of any co-regency, which, indeed, would have been a most singular

arrangement for Assyria. Nor was there the slightest record of any king named Pul upon the Assyrian monuments.

Here was a "Bible difficulty" of the first magnitude. The suggested explanations were various. A great French Assyriologist, M. Oppert, whose name will ever be gratefully remembered by lovers of the Bible, maintained that Pul and Tiglath-pileser III. were different persons. Pul he believed to have been a Chaldean general who had conquered Nineveh, and who became king of Assyria. Fr. Lenormant for some time lent to this theory the support of another great name. But it found little favour. It was attended with huge difficulties, and it was long ago abandoned by Lenormant. Sir Henry Rawlinson at first identified Pul with Adad-nirari III.; for it seemed to him that some of the sounds which could be given to the symbols which formed that king's name had a considerable resemblance to the word Pul. But, in a letter to the *Athenæum*, published in 1869, he gave up this opinion, and identified Pul with Tiglath-pileser. He cited 1 Chronicles v. 26: "And the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, and (translate *even*) the spirit of Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, and he carried them away, even the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, and brought them unto Halah, and Habor, and Hara, and to the river Gozan, unto this day." "The same event," he says, "—namely, the deportation of the tribes beyond the Jordan—is attributed in Scripture (1 Chronicles v. 26) to the two kings associated

together, as if they were one and the same individual, or, at any rate, were acting together; and the passage in question is understood in this sense by both the Syrian and Arabic translators, the single name of Tiglath-pileser being used in one version, and of Pul in the other." Sir Henry might have added that the passage in Chronicles, while mentioning the two names, *uses a verb in the singular* instead of the plural, thus showing that the Scripture regarded these as but different names of one and the same person.

About the same time, Richard Lepsius, in Germany, suggested the same solution. It was also adopted by Schrader, who urged it strongly upon the acceptance of scholars. After mentioning the supposition that Pul might have been a general of Tiglath-pileser's, he points out that the Scriptures always draw a sharp distinction between the king and his generals. "Moreover," he continues, "they usually specify the title, but not the name of these officers (Tartan, Rabsak; Isaiah xx. 1; 2 Kings xviii. 17); lastly, Pul is expressly designated 'king of Assyria,' a fact which ought not to be ignored without some reason." He then mentions two of the other suppositions. "Perhaps, then," he says, "Pul was a rival king to Tiglath-pileser, or else a foreign prince who exercised a supremacy over Assyria? Neither of these shifts is to be adopted. As to the first shift, we possess very accurate information regarding the reign of Tiglath-pileser. . . . But in the inscriptions, which give this information, we have nowhere even the remotest reference to any such rival potentate. Yet in other

cases Oriental monarchs are wont to take a special delight in recording the subjugation of these rival kings. . . . So we must also abandon this possibility."

He then rejects, with equal firmness, the theory that Pul was merely a king of Babylon, and he adds: "These last considerations, taken together with others, compel us to seek for Pul on Assyrian ground, and to see in him one of the well-known Assyrian kings. Bearing the previous investigation in mind, our thoughts can only light on Tiglath-pileser himself." This is only a very brief summary of Schrader's learned discussion of this once knotty point. He sums up his argument some pages further on under nine distinct heads (which I spare the reader, excellent though they are), and concludes: "Under these circumstances it appears, in my estimation, impossible to avoid the supposition that . . . Pul and Tiglath-pileser are one and the same person. If this, however, be so, light is at once cast on the obscurity which involves the chronological problem . . . an obscurity which writers, for some time past, have only been able to dispel by violent hypotheses."*

Part of the explanation was already found in a passage of the Greek fragments of the ancient work of Berossus, a Babylonian priest, on the kings of Babylon. Among the kings he names is one Porus. The letter *r* was often exchanged for the letter *l*, so that Porus was, no doubt, Polus, or (dropping the Greek termination) Pol, that is, the long-lost Pul.

* *The Cuneiform Inscriptions and the Old Testament*, vol. i., pp. 219-231.

The New Biblical Guide.

Now Tiglath-pileser calls himself "king of Sumir and Accad;" that is, king of Chaldæa; and in another inscription, belonging to the end of his reign, he describes himself as *Sar Bâbilu*, king of Babylon, "a title," says Schrader, "which, it can be shown, only those Assyrian kings assumed who were also actually recognised by the Babylonians as kings of Babylon."

But further discovery has for some time now borne us beyond all these discussions. We have left the broken and troubled waters of learned controversy and come into the still waters of certainty. A "Babylonian Chronicle" was discovered by Dr. Pinches among the tablets in the British Museum, and was published in 1887. It is a clay tablet, which was copied in the twenty-second year of Darius Hystaspis, king of Persia, from an older Babylonian document. "It gives the names of the kings who ruled over Babylon from Nabonassar to Shamas-shum-ukin, the Tasoduchinos of Ptolemy, and the brother of Sardanapalus, who afterwards put him to death; the length of each reign is carefully given, and various events of importance are noted from time to time."* It names Tiglath-pileser by this very name of Pûl, or Pûlu. "The name," says Dr. Pinches, "only occurs in native documents, in the Babylonian Canon of kings—to all appearance that from which the Canon of Ptolemy was copied. It is therefore practically certain that he only bore this name officially in Babylonia."† This Chronicle, which gives us also

* Evetts. *New Light on the Bible*, p. 322. † *The Old Testament*, p. 357.

important information on another matter which will come before us, makes it perfectly clear that Tiglath-pileser III. of Assyria, and Pul king of Babylon were one and the same person. The possession of two names was by no means peculiar among the Assyrian rulers. Shalmaneser IV., who succeeded Tiglath-pileser, was known in Babylon as Ululai, and Assurbanipal appears as Kandalunu on Babylonian contract tablets.

Schrader and Pinches have asked themselves how it happened that Tiglath-pileser III. was also known as Pul; and they have given what is practically the same reply. They think it probable that Pul was his original name. It was a time of confusion in Assyria. The representative of the former dynasty suddenly disappears, and this new king, under whom order is restored and Assyria once again becomes a terror to the surrounding nations, takes his place. The likelihood is that, being one of the leading generals, he usurped the throne. This is supported by the fact that some of his officials assumed a tone of equality with Tiglath-pileser III., which suggests that he assumed the royal dignity by some sort of compact with them. Bel-harran-Bel-usur, an official of Tiglath-pileser III., who describes himself as "master of the palace," tells us that he founded a city and erected in it a temple, *which he called by his own name*, Dur-Bel-harran-Bel-usur. This practical assumption of a royal right is quite unusual; but it would be fully explained if the officials had conferred the royal dignity upon Tiglath-pileser, and had secured a place

for themselves which the nobility did not usually enjoy. The name Pulu occurs as that of a charioteer; and this common-place designation was probably by-and-bye exchanged for Tiglath-pileser, a name which Assyrian monarchs had already made famous.

But all this might have been gathered from the Scripture notices. Seeing that Pul was his earlier name, 2 Kings xv. 19 names him by it in the account of his first inroad into Palestine in the days of Menahem. Following the order of history, and recording the facts as an eye-witness of the times, the Scripture narrating the later expedition in the days of Pekah (verse 29), names the monarch by the name by which he was then known—Tiglath-pileser. In other words, Pul was the earlier, and Tiglath-pileser the later, name. After all this discussion, in which the leading archæologists of Europe have joined; after all the questioning and flouting of the Scripture and the thinly-veiled contempt for its authority, learned opinion has come back to the very viewpoint at which the Bible had set its readers from the first. Science here, as always, has, in its last word, justified the Bible and confounded its accusers.

CHAPTER V.

TIGLATH-PILESER, AZARIAH, MENAHEM, AND PEKAH.

THE inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III. are the most important of the Assyrian monuments with which we have so far had to deal. They mention six kings who are named in the Bible, namely, these three kings of Israel: Menahem, Pekah, and Hosea; two kings of Judah: Azariah or Uzziah, and Ahaz; and Rezin, king of Damascus. The references to Azariah will be touched upon afterwards, when we deal with the Books of Chronicles, and we shall, meanwhile, confine ourselves to the mention made of Menahem and Pekah.

We read (2 Kings xv. 19, 20) that "Pul the king of Assyria came against the land: and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver, that his hand might be with him to confirm the kingdom in his hand. And Menahem exacted the money of Israel, even of all the mighty men of wealth, of each man fifty shekels of silver, to give to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria turned back, and stayed not there in the land." The shekel was worth about 3s. 4d.; so that fifty shekels amounted to £8 6s. 8d., and 1,000 talents to £500,000. This levy helps to give us an idea of the temporal condition of Israel in those days when it was rushing down towards its doom. Fifty shekels made one mina of silver; and

as there were sixty minas in a talent, the one thousand talents make altogether 60,000 minas. This means that among the ten tribes, even in this period of national decay and financial impoverishment, there were 60,000 "mighty men of wealth in the land," to whom the parting with fifty shekels was a comparatively small matter. Israel was still, therefore, an important people. It is well to notice also that the money is paid for expected service. It was given, no doubt, in the name of tribute. But there was an understanding that the arrangement involved help in putting down opposition that was now threatening, it may be, the existence of the new dynasty. Of the known inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser there are two kinds. There is one which gives a complete summary of his conquests up to his seventeenth year; and there is a number of other inscriptions which chronicle his campaigns from year to year. But it has fared very badly with these last. A later king, Assurhaddon, who belonged to a different dynasty, and who had, on that account, small respect for the records of his predecessor's achievements, tore down the slabs (on which the inscriptions were engraved) from Tiglath-pileser's palace to help in the construction of a palace of his own. They were not only broken in the removal, but were also additionally damaged in a way that displayed the new king's dislike. The writing was partly chiselled away. "Fortunately, however," says Schrader, "it is not all the plates that have fallen victims to this fate; and, moreover, the destruction of the inscriptions is often so super-

ficial that not infrequently entire sections are still legible." *

Those monuments which detail the movements of the Assyrian kings year by year seem to have been written with more care than the summaries of the proceedings of an entire reign. They are consequently more reliable, and, therefore, more valuable. Turning now to the Bible record, it will be observed that the notices show a new departure, both in the energy and in the policy of the Assyrian empire. Its armies press in upon Israel, and one blow falls after another till the throne founded by Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, is finally overthrown—till Israel is plucked up out of its inheritance, and strangers possess and till the fields that were once divided by lot among the children of Abraham. It will have been already plain to the reader that the Assyrian inscriptions show us exactly the same picture, so far at least as the renewed vigour is concerned. Tiglath-pileser's annals exhibit this very revival of energy and resolute policy. "In 745 B.C., a revolt occurred," says Maspero, "at Kalah, in which Assur-nirari disappeared, and the power fell into the hands of a man little disposed to lead the life of a nominal monarch. We know nothing of the origin of Tiglath-pileser II. (III.); and cannot say whether he belonged to the same family as his predecessors, or whether he was merely an able usurper. If his origin is still obscure, his personality glows in history with an incomparable splendour. He was fashioned after the pattern of

* Vol. i., pp. 234, 235.

the great conquerors of former times, active and ambitious, more busied about the camp than in his palace. Coming, as he did, after years of weakness and of decay, his reign is one of the turning points in Assyrian history. A successor of Assur-nirari, who would have followed the errors of Assur-nirari, would have completed the ruin of the kingdom. Tiglath-pileser II. (III.) revived the energies of the nation, showed it anew the way to foreign lands, and led it further than it had ever been before his time.”*

After quoting the entry in the Eponym Canon which makes the first mention of Tiglath-pileser—“In the month Aaru (Iyyar), day 13, Tiglath-pileser sat upon the throne. In the month Tisritu (Tisri), he made an expedition to (the district) between the rivers,” Dr. Pinches says: “Thus is ushered in the Eponym Canon one of the most important reigns in Assyrian history. How it was that Tiglath-pileser came to the throne is not known. To all appearance, he was not in any way related to his predecessor, Assur-nirari, and it is therefore supposed that he was one of the generals of that king, who, taking advantage of the rising in Assur (of which he may, indeed, have been the instigator) made away with his sovereign, and set himself in his place. . . . Though all Tiglath-pileser’s inscriptions are imperfect, and most of them very fragmentary, they nevertheless contain enough to show of what enormous value they are. Their incompleteness and the absence of dates consequent thereon are, fortunately, compensated

somewhat by the fact that the Eponym Canon is perfect in the part which refers to this king, and that we are therefore able to locate with certainty all the events of his reign." *

When we come to the confirmations of the Books of Chronicles, we shall find Tiglath-pileser's notices of Azariah of Judah specially valuable. His name appears in the first of these inscriptions which touches upon the Scripture. The Assyrian king, in his sixth year conducted an expedition to the north of Syria. After naming a number of cities, he says: "Nineteen districts of the city of Hamath, with the cities which were around them, of the sea-coast of the setting sun" (the Mediterranean), "which in sin and wickedness had taken to Azriau, I added to the boundary of Assyria." † Here let it be marked that Azariah is reigning, and is making his power felt in distant regions in the sixth year of Tiglath-pileser. In the course of this same expedition a large number of princes made their submission to the Assyrian power. Among these are "Rasunnu, of the land of the Sa-Imērisuites"—that is, Rezin of Syria or Damascus—and "Mennihimme (or Menahem), of the city of the Samaritans." Among the other potentates is "Zabibê, queen of the land of Arabia," probably a successor of the queen of Sheba, as from other notices it would appear that this was a district the throne of which was occupied by female representatives of the royal house. The inscription proceeds to describe the tribute received—"Gold, silver, lead, iron, elephant-

* *The Old Testament*, etc., pp. 346, 347. † *Ibid*, p. 349.

skins, ivory, variegated cloth, linen, violet stuff, crimson stuff, terebinth wood, oak (?), everything costly, the treasure of a kingdom, fat lambs, whose fleeces were coloured crimson, winged birds of heaven, whose feathers were coloured violet, horses, mules, oxen and sheep, male camels and female camels with their young, I received."

This matter of the tribute I shall touch upon immediately. But let us now note that these three kings are contemporaries—Azariah of Judah, Menahem of Israel, and Rezin of Damascus. We have here another proof that theories which proceed upon the supposed legendary character of the Books of Kings have not even so good a foundation as the house which was built upon the sand. Treacherous as that foundation was, it formed a solid, though merely temporary, basis. But these critical palaces, reared to shelter a so-called Christian and cultured unbelief, are built upon air: they are visions which disappear from every rational and truly scholarly mind before facts such as this. Rezin of Damascus comes to his end about the seventeenth year of Pekah (2 Kings xvi. 9). From that point backwards, therefore, Rezin's reign must be counted. How long it lasted we do not know, but he was evidently on the throne of Damascus some eighteen or nineteen years before the close of Menahem's reign, a conclusion which cannot be charged with extravagance. With regard to Menahem, there is no necessity whatever to point out obvious inferences. The long reign of Azariah of Judah (named also Uzziah in 2 Kings),

covered in its fifty-two years the reigns of several kings of Israel, and among these the reign of Menahem. In 2 Kings xv. 17 we read: "In the nine and thirtieth year of Azariah king of Judah began Menahem the son of Gadi to reign over Israel, and reigned ten years in Samaria." Here, then, these three kings are reigning together, and the Books of Kings are, consequently, in as direct and close contact with the men and the events of these times as are the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser. In other words, these are equally historical documents.

The passage referring to Menahem's tribute (2 Kings xvi. 19, 20) has already been quoted in the beginning of this chapter. We are told there that Pul "came against the land," and that when the tribute was paid "he stayed not there in the land." There is no record in the king of Assyria's inscriptions of an invasion of the territory of the ten tribes; but it is very probable that part of his forces turned to the south and entered Menahem's territory. The Scripture does not say that Pul fought a battle there, besieged a single city, or destroyed or plundered a single district. Tiglath-pileser's record is equally silent regarding these things. The Assyrian advance was a mere demonstration. The intention was to compel a recognition of Assyrian supremacy, and not to invade and conquer. The Scripture also intimates this, when it informs us that the money was given in order that the hand of the king of Assyria might be with Menahem "to confirm the kingdom in his hand." That it was a time of political unrest in Israel is shown in Menahem's own

usurpation, and by the subsequent slaughter of his son. The chronology appears to indicate that the tribute was paid at the end of his reign, when friends may have been failing him, and enemies multiplying. But it may have happened at the commencement, when hostile factions were as yet unsubdued. The inscription may also shed some light upon the nature of the tribute which Menahem collected. It was all in silver, though it was an enormous amount of that metal—a thousand talents. Tiglath-pileser was probably arranging, for some purpose of his own, the variety and the quantity of the various metals which he was to take back with him to Assyria. As we have seen, he enumerates these—"gold, silver, lead, iron," &c., &c. It was no doubt intimated to Menahem what special form the tribute of Israel was to take; and so it was sent neither in gold, nor in other objects of value, but wholly in silver.

To estimate, however, the full weight of these confirmations, we have to remember that the Bible was the only Book in existence which recorded the deeds of Tiglath-pileser, or that even handed down his name. "The impression," says Schrader, "that we gain from these inscriptions respecting Tiglath-pileser corresponds throughout to what we know about him from the Bible. Nowhere else, as is well known, is the king mentioned. He appears to us throughout in these records as a powerful warrior-prince, who has subjugated beneath his sceptre the Western Asiatic territory, from the Median frontier mountains in the East to the Mediterranean Sea in the West, including

a part of Cappadocia.”* The long-continued vigour of his reign, the crushing weight of his blows, and the thoroughness of his conquests—in one word, the same man and the same events live before us on the page of Scripture that the archæologists now meet with in his broken records. Accordance of this kind bears the hall-mark of history.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CAPTIVITY OF THE TWO AND A-HALF TRIBES.

THE blow that was finally to extinguish the kingdom of the ten tribes was foreshadowed in the fate which overtook the tribes on the east of the Jordan, and a large part of the adjacent Israelitish territory. The Book of Chronicles, in dealing specially with the two and a-half tribes on the east of the Jordan, tells us that these were the first to suffer, as they were the first, apparently, to sin. We read that “they transgressed against the God of their fathers, and went a whoring after the gods of the people of the land whom God destroyed from before them. And the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, even the spirit of Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, and he carried them away, even the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh” (1 Chronicles v. 25, 26).

* Vol. i., p. 239.

In their isolated position there may have been special temptations to idolatry ; but in any case they had fallen, and were now to be judged. Let us note, in passing, the name by which Jehovah is here named—"the God of Israel." It was because He was Israel's God, and would not on His part break the covenant which on their part they had so lightly broken, that His hand now fell in heavy chastisement. He will not part with Israel, and, therefore, its heart must be broken with strokes of judgment that it may seek and obtain mercy. It does not surprise us to find all that packed into a phrase that merely indicates that this is not rejection but correction—this does not surprise us when we remember that it is *God's* Book. He has in this very fashion dealt with us in nature ; for there He reserves His disclosures for those who take pleasure therein. But in man's books such calm and confident dropping of a seed for thought would indeed astonish us. A truth like that in a mind not under the perfect control of God's Spirit would have burned like a fire in his bones. It must needs have been uttered ; and, if not proclaimed upon the house-tops, it would at least have been so largely written here that he who ran might read it.

The passage in ■ Kings xv. 29 shows that the calamity embraced also a large district to the north and to the west. "In the days of Pekah king of Israel came Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, and took Ijon and Abel-beth-maachah, and Janoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali, and carried them captive to Assyria." This

description, which used to be to us a list of mere names, has become eloquent in these last days through the systematic and scientific researches of the Palestine Exploration Fund. The light which has in this way been cast upon the passage has been ably focussed by the late Mr. Harper.* He says: "Ijon ('ruin')—its position in the hills of Naphtali, a store city—was captured in the days of Asa by Ben-hadad. The exact site is doubtful; El Khiâm has been suggested, north of Banias. The name is still preserved in a little plain near El Khiâm, called Merj 'Ayûn ('the meadow of springs'). Abel-beth-Maacah, a city in the extreme north, was an important city, for it is said to have had 'many daughters,' that is, inhabitants (2 Sam. xx.19), now called Abl, a village six and a-half miles west of Banias; also called 'Abel on the waters.' There is a good stream of water here, and some ruins on the top of a conical hill. The Derdârah from Ijon falls from the western slope of the mound, and from the mountain near gushes the powerful stream of the Ruahîng. Janoah, now Yânûh, in the mountains of Naphtali. Then Kedesh of Naphtali, a city of refuge; now the village of Kades, west of Lake Huleh. The site is on a high ridge, jutting out from the western hills, well watered, surrounded by plains. There are ruins of a temple of the sun. The hill on which the buildings stand has an artificial appearance. It probably was partly levelled and filled out in places to make it regular. In the days of Josephus it was populous, hostile to the Jews, and fortified. The place is rich

* *The Bible and Modern Discoveries*, pp. 455, 456.

in antiquities of all kinds; the tombs and sarcophagi are especially fine. Hazor ('enclosed'), now Jebel Hadîreh ('the mountain of the *fold*'), fortified by Solomon. A hill close by, now called Tell Hara, is found to be covered with ruins. Here are remains of an ancient fortress; a city with its walls and towers is still to be traced on the eastern slope; broken glass and pottery abound. This is probably the site of Hazor. Galilee, a 'circle' or 'circuit' around Kedesh, bounded on the west by Acre—that is, the plain of Acre to the foot of Carmel. The Jordan, the Sea of Galilee, Lake Huleh, and the spring at Dan, were the eastern border, while the northern reached from Dan westwards to Phœnicia. The southern border ran from the base of Carmel to Mount Gilboa, then to Bethshean, to Jordan. It was divided into Upper and Lower Galilee.

"Naphtali: Joshua calls it 'the hill country of Naphtali.' It is chiefly mountainous. 'The soil is rich, full of trees' (Josephus). Even now its forests and ever-varying scenery are amongst the finest in Palestine. At this moment the Arabs call it 'the land of good tidings.' It and northern Israel was that part called 'Galilee of the Gentiles,' from the number of heathen inhabitants."

Here we learn, therefore, that besides Gilead—the territory on the other side of Jordan—the whole land of Naphtali and Galilee was subdued, and their inhabitants carried away captive. Also in immediate connection with this we read, in the following verse: "And Hoshea the son of Elah made a conspiracy

ainst Pekah the son of Remaliah, and smote him, and slew him, and reigned in his stead, in the twentieth year of Jotham the son of Uzziah." As Pekah was then the foe of Assyria, those opposed to the Israelitish monarch would naturally reckon on the assistance of Assyria in the execution of their hostile designs, and Tiglath-pileser would as naturally regard their successes, and indeed their acts, as his own. This will explain the reference to *his* slaying Pekah, which occurs in the following inscription. This monument is, unfortunately, in a very mutilated condition. The Assyrian king, says Schrader, had for some years been "exclusively occupied in the East, and, according to the list of Governors (the Eponym Canon), involved in struggles with Armenia and certain Eastern countries. . . . Not till the year 734 do we find him again engaged in the West." * In this year, apparently, occurred the memorable expedition which sealed the fate of so large a portion of the Israelitish people. A piece of the inscription is broken away in the middle, "yet," writes Schrader, "we can clearly make out what the inscription on this plate was about. It commences with the enumeration of a number of towns reduced by Tiglath-pileser." Among the first of these are two towns on the west of the Lebanon range. The next passage is much broken, but contained the names of other cities, accompanied by the words, "My officers I placed over them." That is, the native rulers were displaced and their territory actually included within

* Vol. i., p. 245, 246.

the domain of Assyria. Immediately after this comes a passage which I give with Schrader's suggestions for filling up the blanks. These suggested readings are in square brackets. ". . . . the town Ga-al [ad=Gilead?] . . . [A]bel [Beth-Maacha?] which was above (on this side?) the land Beth-Omri (Samaria) the distant the broad, I turned in its entire extent into the territory of Assyria, I set my officers, the viceroys over it. Hanno of Gaza, who took to flight before my troops, fled to the land Egypt. Gaza [I captured], his possessions, his gods [I carried away], my and my royal statue [I erected] . . in the midst of Beth . . the gods of their land I counted [as plunder] like birds transferred him to his land and (?) gold, silver, garments of Berom (?), wool (?) the great I received as tribute. The land of Beth-Omri (Samaria) the distant, the whole of its inhabitants together with their property I deported to Assyria. Pekah, their king, I slew. Hoshea I appointed [to rule] over them. Ten talents of gold, a thousand of silver (?) together with their I received from them; [to Assyria brought] I them, (I) who Samsi queen of Aribu," &c.

I have said that this statement that Tiglath-pileser slew Pekah need not be pressed, and that what was done by those who were co-operating with him in his antagonism to the Israelitish king was regarded by him as his own deed. This might possibly be regarded, however, as a lame defence of the Scripture. The Bible contains no hint that the

~ *The Captivity of the two and a-half Tribes.* ~

Assyrian king had anything to do with Pekah's death. It says only that Hoshea the son of Elah made a conspiracy against Pekah the son of Remaliah, and smote him, and slew him, and reigned in his stead. The two narratives might, consequently, be said to give us two quite different accounts of this usurper's end; and the difference might, as is customary, have been used to point the moral that the full inspiration of the Scripture is a dream, and that Bible history is not to be accepted as accurate in minute details. Fortunately, however, Tiglath-pileser himself has set our free-thinking friends right in this matter. In another account of the same expedition he says: "They overthrew Pakahah (Pekah) their king, and placed Ausi'a (Hosea) [upon the throne] over them. Ten talents of gold . . . talents of silver . . . their tribute I received," &c.* Here there is absolute agreement with the Scripture. Pekah's death was not an assassination; that is, it was not the act of one man tempted by the prospect of a throne. It was the result of an organised conspiracy. Hoshea was evidently the leading spirit, but he was not alone; and here the Assyrian record says the same thing—"They overthrew Pekah their king, and placed Hoshea over them."

The mention of Samsi queen of Arabia shows that Zabibe, named in a previous inscription which we have had before us, was now succeeded by another sovereign, and that this sovereign was also a queen. This, as has already been noted, was probably the district

* Dr. Pinches. *The Old Testament*, &c., pp. 354, 355.

from which the queen of Sheba came—a land whose custom it was to be governed, occasionally, if not always, by a female sovereign. But it also shows the energy and determination which characterised this campaign. Tiglath-pileser had swept not only over North Syria and the sea-coast, but had pursued his victorious march even to Arabia. And, though the condition of the inscriptions gives us only suggestions, and not descriptions, of what was done, there can be no doubt that these annals of Tiglath-pileser confirm the account of Scripture. For, even though we should hesitate to apply the words, “The land of Beth-Omri the distant . . . the whole of its inhabitants, together with their property I deported to Assyria,” to Gilead and Naphtali, there is no room whatever for doubt that the campaign was one of the very kind described in the Scripture, and that the land of Israel—Beth-Omri it was named in Assyria—*escaped in part*. For, instead of appointing his own officers over what remained of the dominion, Tiglath-pileser himself tells us that he set Hoshea upon the throne, and in the second inscription that “they”—the conspirators—“placed Ausi’a over them.” That means, that a large part of the Israelitish people yet remained in possession of their territory.

The fate of the two and a-half tribes as well of Naphtali and of the surrounding districts was in complete accord with the new policy of Assyria. A marked feature of the campaigns of Tiglath-pileser III. is this very carrying away captive to Assyria of the original populations of a conquered country, the plant-

ing in their stead populations which were likewise carried from a far distance, placing Assyrian officials over them, and annexing the lands in this way to Assyria. We have an illustration of the effectiveness of that policy in the case of Samaria—the rest of the Israelitish territory which was afterwards dealt with in that fashion. Samaria gave no trouble to its new masters. From broken men, with no common ties and with no fatherland to defend, no resistance was to be feared. The policy put an end effectually to the plottings and the alliances which had formerly sprung up in the conquered districts as soon as the Assyrian armies had withdrawn. And this policy may be said to have been Tiglath-pileser's own invention. "The kings who had preceded him," says Maspero, "had the same idea of conquest as the Pharaohs of the eighteenth dynasty: the conquered countries were leisurely pillaged, submitted to tribute, and their kings subjected to homage, but they were not incorporated with the territory of Assyria. Tiglath-pileser proceeded by way of annexation and of colonisation. In the countries which he thought it useful to guard, he dethroned the family which had reigned over them, he established there troops of prisoners brought from distant countries, and confided the government to Assyrian officers who were directly responsible to himself." *

And this policy was ruthlessly carried out. We meet the evidences of this fact constantly in his inscriptions. He tells us that he began his reign

* *Histoire Ancienne*, pp. 396, 397.

with this policy. On a slab, headed: "From the commencement of my rule," he details his campaigns in Babylonia, among the Aramæans, among "those on the banks of the Tigris," among "the Surapi as far as the river Ukni, which is on the strand of the lower sea;" and he tells us that he not only took possession and built towns, but that he also transplanted the inhabitants. "The inhabitants," he says, "of the countries, the plunder of my hand, I settled there, my viceroy I placed over them." The inscription proceeds: "The land Bet-Silan in its compass like . . . I crushed; the town Sarabân, its great capital, I desolated like an overwhelming flood; their booty I carried away. Nabu-usabsi their king, I caused to be impaled before the gateway of his city; his prisoners, his wife, his sons, his daughters, his property, the treasures of his palace I carried away as plunder. The land Bet-Amukkan I trod down as in threshing; the whole of its inhabitants, its property, I carried off to Assyria. I who smote Pukad, Ruhua, Lithau, carried them away from their abodes, subjugated the Aramæans, as many as there were of them, to my yoke and took the kingdom of their kings." *

He has also recorded that he transported on one occasion over 150,000. He says: "I took 155,000 people and children from them. Their horses and cattle without number I carried off. Those countries to the boundaries of Assyria I added . . . like clay I trampled and the assembly of their people to

* Schrader, vol. i., pp. 224, 225.

Assyria I sent." The inscription which presented a continuous history of his reign, contains several of these notices. I note them here as they occur. "The Puqudu (Pekod) like corn I swept away, their fighting men I slew, their abundant spoil I carried off. The Puqudu in the cities of Lahiru of Idibirina, Hilimmu, and Pilutu, which border on Elam, to the boundaries of Assyria I added, and in the hands of my general, the prefect of Arapha, I placed them. The Kaldudu all there were I removed, and in the midst of Assyria I placed them." The same system was pursued even in Chaldea. He says that in addition to impaling Nabu-usabsi, as he has already told us, he captured "5,500 of their people and children." Then we read: "The cities of Tarbazu and Yapallu I captured. Thirty thousand of their people and children, their furniture, their goods, and their gods I carried off." Again: "The people of Bit-sahalli feared and the tower them for their stronghold they took. That city by siege and famine I took and threw to the ground, 5,400 of their people and children, their spoil, their furniture, their goods, his wife, his sons and his daughters, I carried off."

A number of districts in "rugged Media" were attacked. "The whole of them," he says, "in hostility I overwhelmed. Their numerous fighting men I slew. Sixty thousand five hundred of their people and children, horses, asses, mules, oxen, and sheep, without number I carried off."* In short, Tiglath-pileser III. had reduced this new system of

* George Smith, *Assyrian Discoveries*, pp. 254-260.

conquest to a science. It solved the problem of how to preserve lands in cultivation and people to inhabit them who should enrich the empire with their industries, and nevertheless to break the spirit of revolt, and, in a word, to make peace without making a desert. This problem had up to that time confronted and baffled every conquering power. Tiglath-pileser came now with his solution, and the bright and faithful mirror of the Bible *shows us just here* the advent of this policy. "In the days of Pekah king of Israel came Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, and took Ijon, and Abel-beth-maachah, and Janoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali, and carried them captive to Assyria" (2 Kings xv. 29). It hardly needed the special confirmation, the actual mention of this event in the Tiglath-pileser's annals. We hear in the words of Scripture the tramp of his splendidly-led armies, and before our eyes are set the special policy and the personality of the man of the time.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FALL OF DAMASCUS.

THE Syrian capital has had many masters and many experiences. Again and again has it been overwhelmed with disaster, but no disaster has as yet been able to bring its long story to the end that has

overtaken that of Nineveh, of Babylon, and of almost every other of its ancient peers. Its perennial streams, its abundant vegetation, and its importance as a halting-place between the Euphrates and the Mediterranean have caused it to spring up again and again like the grass of a well-watered meadow over which the sharp scythe has swept.

We have seen how severely it had been chastised by Adad-nirari king of Assyria, and how its independence had apparently been extinguished by Jehoahaz king of Israel. But in sixty years after that overthrow we find that it had gathered strength, had regained its independence, and was again making its existence felt in raids upon the neighbouring states. In the closing words of the notice of the reign of Jotham, king of Judah, we read: "In those days the Lord began to send against Judah Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah" (2 Kings xv. 37).

The traditional foe and victim of Syria had been the kingdom of the ten tribes; but the weakness of each had probably suggested an end to hostilities, and the formation of an alliance for mutual protection and support in distant enterprises. The news of this alliance struck Judah with consternation. The Book of Isaiah has enabled us to see the effect of the tidings upon king and people. "And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah . . . went up toward Jerusalem to war against it, but could not prevail against it. And it was told the house of David,

saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim. And his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind " (Isaiah vii. 1, 2).

Isaiah was sent specially to Ahaz with an offer of Divine protection. The erring king was even asked to say what sign he desired to assure him that the promised help would not fail. But Ahaz would none of it, and the prophet's offer was politely dismissed. The king thought he knew of one whose help was quite as effective and as certain as any help from that God could be whose worship he was even then planning to extinguish in Judea. He would send to the king of Assyria. God, who was speaking to him through His servant, immediately met the unspoken thought, and thereby gave the king a sign which might well have brought him to his Maker's feet. "The Lord," said the prophet, "shall bring upon thee and upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, days that have not come, from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah—even the king of Assyria." The power on the Tigris was the long-appointed scourge, and not the deliverer, of Judah. But signs and entreaties availed nothing. The king's mind was made up. "So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, saying, I am thy servant and thy son: come up, and save me out of the hand of the king of Syria and out of the hand of the king of Israel, who rise up against me. And Ahaz took the silver and the gold that was found in the house of the Lord, and in the treasures of the king's house,

and sent it for a present to the king of Assyria. And the king of Assyria hearkened unto him: for the king of Assyria went up against Damascus, and took it, and carried the people of it captive to Kir, and slew Rezin " (2 Kings xvi. 7-9).

In this way Ahab's policy seemed to be fully justified. First Pekah fell, and then Rezin and the empire of Damascus with him. But policy has to be judged not by its apparent first-fruits, but by its harvest. Folly's captives are led first into the banqueting house, and they drink from a cup that sparkles with delights; but "her guests are in the depths of hell." We have now to do, however, with the question which many an Ahaz of to-day forces upon us. Is this narrative history? Two centuries elapsed between these things and the penning of this Book of Kings. To us it matters nothing whether there were two or sixty centuries between the events and this record of them. If we have here "God's Word written," then the events of the most distant past can be as minutely recorded as the events of the present hour. There is no forgetting with God, save the forgetting of mercy. The sins He forgives are cast behind His back and remembered no more for ever; but from His eye no dimness veils either past or future. I repeat, therefore, that we, who believe in the miracle of Inspiration, expect to find here the clearness and the clean-cut impression of a fully-informed and absolutely true account. On the other hand, the critical theory is that we have in this Book, as elsewhere in the Scripture history, mere tradition

manipulated by a hundred or a thousand fingers, and last of all "insensibly modified and sometimes (especially in the later books) coloured by the associations of the age in which the writer recording it lived."* This general accusation, which tells specially against the later Books, is bad enough. What amount of weight can any thinking man place upon records of that kind? But in 2 Kings the matter is worse than usual; for we are told by the same "high authority" that it contains "long continuous narratives" which are "now and then expanded by the compiler."†

These are the two accounts of this Book which we once more bring into the light of marvellously recovered facts. Which belief is justified? Here is the verdict of a higher critic, but who, because he is also an Assyriologist, has had to pile up the facts which need only to be hurled against the higher criticism to sink it. He says: "According to the Bible (2 Kings xvi. 9) this despatch of tribute by Ahaz was followed by the expedition of the Assyrian against Damaskus. With this harmonises the list of governors"—the Eponym Canon—"which places the siege of Damaskus in the years 733 and 732. The campaign ended, after what was evidently a lengthy siege, with the capture of the capital of the Syrian kingdom, the deportation of the inhabitants, and the execution of Rezin. The cuneiform records and the Bible here supplement each other in a manner that leaves nothing to be desired. We are informed in the Bible about the

* Dr. Driver. *Introduction*, p. xviii. † *Ibid.*, p. 183.

conquest of the city, the deportation of the inhabitants, and the execution of the king, but about the length of the siege we are left in uncertainty. We obtain intelligence on the last point from the inscriptions, which also give details as to the number of those who were deported, and the way in which the Great King treated the conquered country, and likewise inform us of the death of the king of Damaskus in an inscription now unfortunately lost.”*

Of the main inscription of which Dr. Schrader speaks, Dr. Pinches gives the following translation. “Tiglath-pileser,” he writes, “went up against Damascus. The Syrian king, however, decided to resist, and a battle was fought in which he was defeated, and obliged to seek safety in flight. With a grim, not to say barbarous, humour, Tiglath-pileser describes his flight and his treatment of his supporters——

“. . . . (like) a mouse he entered the great gate of his city. His chiefs (I took) alive with my hands, (and) I caused them to be raised up, and to view his land (on) stakes”—in other words, they were impaled—“forty-five camps of soldiers I collected (in the province) of his city, and shut him up like a bird in a cage. His plantations, fields, orchards [?] and woods, which were without number, I cut down, and did not leave one (the city) Hādara, the house (—dwelling-place) of the father of Rasunnu (Rezon) of the land of the Sa-imerisuites, (the place where) he was born, I besieged, I captured: 800 people with their posses-

* Schrader, vol. i., p. 250.

sions . . . their oxen, their sheep, I carried off: 750 prisoners of the city, Kurussa . . . (prisoners) of the city of the Irmaites, 550 prisoners of the city Metuna, I carried off: 591 cities . . . of sixteen districts of the land of Sa-imerisu (Damascus) I destroyed like flood-mounds." Dr. Pinches adds in a foot-note an explanation of this last figure. That is, he says, "like the ruins of cities which had been swept away by a flood. In both Assyria and Babylonia floods were common things, and the devastation they caused naturally gave rise to the simile." *

This proves, what we have already had occasion to notice, that "Damascus" in 2 Kings means not only the city, but also the territory of which it was the capital. Tiglath-pileser tells us that the policy of transporting the inhabitants was systematically carried out over the entire country. One is naturally reminded of the striking sentence into which Schrader compresses his verdict—"The cuneiform records and the Bible here supplement each other in a manner that leaves nothing to be desired." That is, both stand on the very highest level of history. Tiglath-pileser's inscriptions are the testimony, not only of a contemporary, but also of a first mover—indeed, *the* prime agent—in these transactions. And in a perfectly independent way the Bible gives us a narrative displaying as full a knowledge, and as absolute accuracy, as that of the Assyrian king. Need I say, then, that this is *not* tradition, that it bears no mark of manipulating fingers, and that it has not been coloured or enlarged

* *The Old Testament*, p. 354.

by the last narrator who placed it on record? A full inspiration, which placed the writer at God's viewpoint, and that illumined his understanding with the light of perfect knowledge, can explain these phenomena, which, to an open and candid mind, no theory of tradition ever can explain.

We find, however, in the inscription just quoted no reference to Rezin's execution. The animus against him, entertained by the Assyrian king, is apparent enough. When he made a special example of the city which was the scene of Rezin's birth, it is scarcely likely that he would have spared Rezin himself. We are told, too, that he shut him up in Damascus "like a bird in a cage," and we know that he took that city. But all doubt on this point has been cleared away by Sir Henry Rawlinson's report of a tablet which was found at Nimroud, but which was unfortunately left behind in Asia and never afterwards recovered. Sir Henry had, however, read the inscription, and found it to be another account of this triumph, and one in which the slaying of Rezin was distinctly mentioned.*

Immediately after his deliverance from his foes, Ahaz went to meet the Assyrian king at Damascus. "And king Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria" (2 Kings xvi. 10). In Tiglath-pileser's "great triumphal inscription" there is a long list of those who paid tribute to him. In this, mention is made of the following names: "Sanib of Ammon, Salman of Moab, Mitinti of Ashkelon, Joahaz of Judah, Kôsmalak of Edom," etc. It is probable that

* Schrader, vol., i. p. 257.

there was an imposing gathering at Damascus of all the neighbouring princes to acknowledge the overlordship of the Assyrian king. It will be noticed that Ahaz is called Jeho-ahaz in the inscription. There can be no doubt that this was the king's name, and the omission of the first part of it in every reference to him in the Scripture, whether in prophecy or in history, is eloquent of Bible methods. There is purpose in its very omissions. It teaches by its silences. How deeply this man sinned is shown by the parallel account in 2 Chronicles; and so Jehovah withdraws His name, and Jeho-ahaz becomes Ahaz. It was the symbol of God's withdrawal from the man.

It is worthy of notice that the Assyrian records of this time contain an indirect, but remarkable confirmation of the Scripture statements regarding the carrying off to Assyria of the inhabitants of Damascus, and of Galilee, and of Gilead. Just at this time, a change is introduced into the commercial life of Assyria. The Phœnician writing (the Hebrew and Syrian alphabet) and the Aramæan language now begin to be met with. Assyrian weights and Assyrian commercial contracts often bear Phœnician or Aramæan (Syrian) inscriptions. This shows that there was now a large element in Assyrian trade and Society for which the Aramæan speech and the Phœnician writing were necessary. In other words, there had been just such accessions to the population of Assyria as the Scripture has described.

CHAPTER VIII.

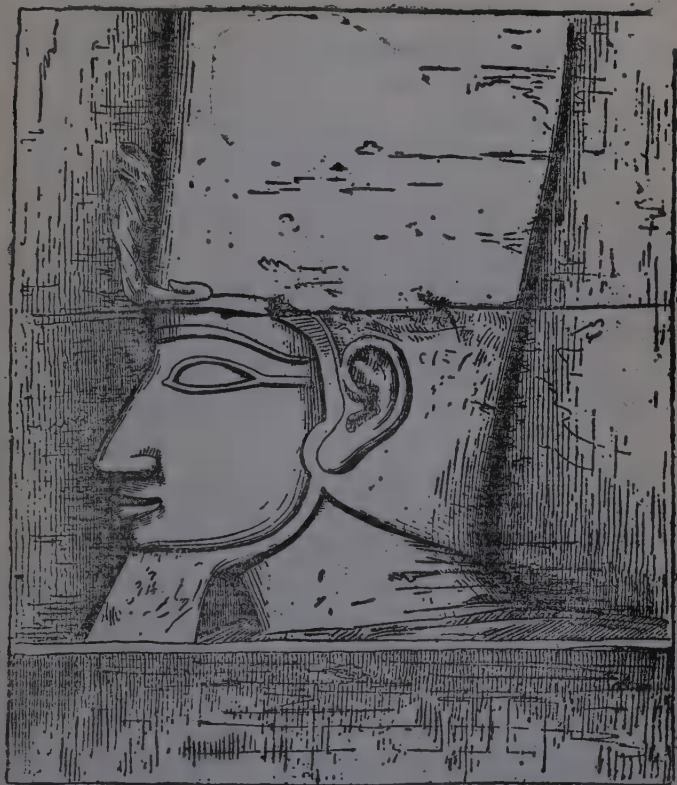
SO, KING OF EGYPT.

IN the account of the closing years of the Israelitish kingdom, we meet a reference to Egypt which throws light upon many of the expostulations of the prophets. In 2 Kings xvii. 4, we read: "And the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea: for he had sent messengers to So king of Egypt, and brought no present to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year." To obtain relief from the tyranny and the extortions of the great Eastern power, Hoshea, the last king of Israel, turned in his poverty and helplessness to Egypt. The prophet Hosea, a contemporary of the king who bore the same name, complains of this failure to look unto God: "Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart: they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria" (vii. 11). But all that Egypt had to offer them was a grave. Their friendship with Egypt on the one hand, and the hostility of Assyria on the other, would alike fulfil God's decree and root them out of the land. Egypt offers them an asylum, and Assyria furnished a prison. "They shall not dwell," says the prophet, "in the Lord's land; but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and they shall eat unclean things in Assyria. . . For, lo, they are gone because of destruction: Egypt shall gather them up, Memphis shall bury them" (ix. 3, 6).

Just at this very time also we find Isaiah's message to Judah filled with denunciation of a like turning to Egypt on the part of the leaders of the Jewish people. "Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of Me; and that cover with a covering, but not of My Spirit, that they may add sin to sin: that walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at My mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt! Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion" (xxx. 1-3). Again in xxxi. 1, we read: "Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord." We are told, too, that when Sennacherib sent his demand for the surrender of Jerusalem, his general said to Hezekiah: "Lo, thou trustest in the staff of this broken reed, on Egypt; whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it; so is this Pharaoh king of Egypt to all that trust in him" (Isa. xxxvi. 6).

It is quite clear, then, if these references to Egypt really belong to the time—in other words, if these Books are genuine and reliable—that Egypt has in some way revived. It had practically passed out of the politics of Palestine; it was torn by internal dissensions; its princes were depending upon foreign troops, whose services were hired, and not upon native Egyptian soldiery. The country had, in fact,

entered upon that long period of decay that comes to one after another of the great martial kingdoms of



SO, OR SABACK, KING OF ETHIOPIA AND OF EGYPT (25th dynasty).
(From the Monuments.)

the earth. Did anything happen in the time of Isaiah the prophet and of Hoshea king of Israel to arrest

Egypt's downward course for the moment, to arouse her energies, and to make her power felt in the adjoining countries? The reply to this question brings before us another of those surprising confirmations of the thoroughly historical character of the Old Testament, which have so woefully perplexed the critics and turned so many of them into defenders of this Bible which their former friends still continue to determinedly attack. Egypt did, in fact, revive in this very fashion about the end of the eighth century before our era. It became once more a strong power. It concerned itself again with foreign politics. It attracted the attention of the harassed nations of the East, and made its alliances and laid its plans for re-claiming its ancient conquests. Maspero has told the story in connection with these very incidents in Jewish and Israelitish history. "For the first time for 200 years," he writes, "the empire of the Pharaohs was re-constituted from the sources of the Blue Nile to the mouths of the river, but no longer for the benefit of Egypt. Ethiopia, so long a vassal, now lorded it in its turn. Napata was queen in the place of Thebes and of Memphis."*

The first invasion under Piankhi did not succeed in retaining hold of Egypt. The Ethiopian armies were withdrawn from the north and the centre of the kingdom. But the invasion was repeated by his grandson, Sabacon, with more permanent results. The contending princes of Egypt were either attracted to his side or were put down, and Sabacon

* *Histoire Ancienne*, pp. 413, 414.

became the founder of the dynasty of Ethiopian kings known as the twenty-fifth. "It was no longer attempted," says Maspero, "as in the time of Piankhi, to establish a kind of vassalage over Egypt. Sabacon assumed the place of the Pharaohs, and became the chief of a new dynasty composed entirely of Ethiopian kings. He at least attempted to re-organise the country upon which he imposed his sway, and to make the offence of his foreign origin forgotten in the wisdom of his administration. The princes were respected; but they were closely watched, and compelled to obey like the ordinary governors. Their abasement and the re-uniting of the country under the hand of a single man rendered those labours for the entire land easy, which the wars of earlier ages had made it impossible to execute. The causeways were repaired; the canals cleaned out and enlarged; the foundations of the towns raised above the level of the inundation.

. . . To obtain the necessary hands, Sabacon substituted for the death penalty labour upon the public works; and this well-contrived policy gave him a reputation for clemency. The country, reduced at last to tranquility, commenced to breathe again, and to re-establish itself with that power of marvellous vitality of which it had already given so many proofs.

"A revival so unexpected was bound to attract the attention of foreign peoples. Only a little while ago Israel and Judah had sought the support of a kinglet confined to Tanis, in a corner of the Delta; what ought they not to do to secure the friendship of a

prince whose dominion extended from the fabulous regions of Ethiopia to the shores of the Mediterranean, and who commanded armies as great as those of the king of Assyria? Phœnicians, Jews, and Philistines, all the peoples whom the ambition of Tiglath-pileser had disquieted, felt that their salvation would come from Egypt if it could come from any quarter. Hoshea sent presents to Sabacon, and solicited his alliance against Shalmaneser. Various motives inclined the Ethiopian to receive these overtures with favour. He knew that his Egyptian predecessors had possessed Palestine and carried their arms even to the Tigris. What had previously been possible and glorious appeared to him to be still possible at the present hour. And, although even the desire of adding another name to the long list of the conquering Pharaohs might not have disposed him to favour the Jews, prudence counselled that he should not discourage them. The progress of the Assyrians towards the Isthmus of Suez, slow at first, had within the last twenty years been accelerated in a menacing fashion, and had become for Egypt a subject of perpetual fears. It was necessary either to conquer the new masters of Asia and to drive them beyond the Euphrates, or to at least raise up against them a barrier of little kingdoms in the conflict with which the ardour of their attack might be quenched. Sabacon affected to consider Hoshea's gifts as tribute, and his requests for help as an act of homage. The walls of Karnak, which had already enrolled so many times the names of vanquished

peoples, complacently recorded what the vanity of the Ethiopian called 'the tributes of Syria.' " *

That record on the walls of Karnak, of tribute received from "the king of Shara," that is, of Syria, is also in striking harmony with the circumstances of the time; and it need not be set down either to Egyptian vanity or to Egyptian ignorance. Damascus was wiped out, and the only considerable native potentate now remaining in that region was Hoshea king of Israel. And, if not in actual possession of some of the Syrian territory through the favour of Shalmaneser, he had claims founded on ancient conquests which his ambassadors to Egypt would not forget to set forth in the enumeration of their master's titles. But what about the name of this new potentate who ascends the throne of the Pharaohs? "Sabacon," or "Sabaco," is not "So," as this king is called in the Bible. Is the king, then, to whom the Bible tells us Hoshea sent for help, the Sabacon whom Maspero has so vividly and so eloquently placed before us? And if the monarchs are identical, how comes the form of the Bible name to be so widely different from the name which the Greek historians and the Egyptian monuments have handed down to us?

The Jewish Rabbis or Scribes, who somewhere about the sixth century of the Christian era introduced vowel points into the Hebrew text—a text which they did not alter—did not always know the ancient pronunciation of the words. The word which they read "So" can also be read *Seveh*, or *Saveh*.

* Pages 415-418.

Now, this gives us the pronunciation of the Egyptian king's name *which was common at the time*. To his contemporaries he was not Sabaco, but Saveh or Sabi. The Assyrian inscriptions contain his name, and there it is given as Sab'i—a form identical with that in the Hebrew. But what, then, of the *c* or *k* sound which appears in Sabaco, and which is also found in the name as it is written on the Egyptian monuments? This has been explained by M. Oppert. The old Ethiopian tongue, he tells us, possessed a class of gutturals which is found in no other Semitic speech, and it is one of these which is represented by the *k* on the Egyptian monuments. But this did not represent the true sound of the Ethiopian letter. "The Hebrew," says Oppert, "suppresses entirely this embarrassing letter . . . the Egyptian gives as its equivalent the ruder sound of *k*, *Shabak*."

Here, again, therefore, this slight reference to Saveh, or So, king of Egypt, and the prophets' expostulations about trusting to Egypt and forsaking the mercy-seat of God—this condemnation of the substitution of politics for prayer—are throbbing with the life and the feeling of the time. To say merely that these are confirmed by recent discoveries, and that these Books, tested at this point so unexpectedly, are shown to be utterly historical, is to fall far short of the truth. The Books are steeped in the life of the time. So true is this, that we may surely trust to their allusions and phrases, and even to their words, when closely scanned, to lead us back into the scenes and into the very atmosphere of those ancient

days. Merely *historical* accuracy can never explain that. This is the fidelity and the fulness of inspiration.

CHAPTER IX.

SHALMANESER IV., SARGON, AND THE CAPTURE OF SAMARIA.

AS the Scripture had predicted, Hoshea's application to Egypt did not save him. On the contrary, it precipitated the doom of himself and of his people. The secret service of Assyria seems to have been well organised and specially effective; for tidings of the Egyptian embassy appear to have speedily reached the Assyrian court; and, before either Egypt or Israel could make preparations for war, the matter was summarily dealt with. Hoshea was apparently summoned to a conference either with the king or with one of his generals. The proofs that he had broken faith with the Assyrian monarch were too plain to be denied, and Hoshea returned no more to his throne or to his country. The Scripture has thus recorded the story: "In the twelfth year of Ahaz



king of Judah began Hoshea the son of Elah to reign in Samaria over Israel nine years. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, but not as the kings of Israel who were before him. Against him came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria; and Hoshea became his servant, and gave him presents. And the



BEARERS OF TRIBUTE (*from the Monuments.*)

king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea: for he had sent messengers to So (Saveh) king of Egypt, and brought no present to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year: therefore the king of Assyria shut him up, and bound him in prison" (2 Kings xvii. 1-4).

This, however, was only the first step. The chief plotter was removed, preparations for rebellion were arrested, and the plans of the conspirators were thrown into confusion. The next step was the advance of the Assyrian forces in overwhelming strength. "Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes" (verses 5, 6).

The mention of Shalmaneser in this passage led to a long controversy. Had it occurred in the merest fragment of an Assyrian slab every archæologist would have accepted it as quite conclusive. They would have hailed it as the discovery of a new king, and would have at once placed Shalmaneser on their lists. But, as the name only occurred in the Bible, and in Josephus, who was looked upon as merely retailing Bible statements, it was set down as another name for Sargon. This was due to the fact that the monuments of Shalmaneser, the successor of Tiglath-pileser, had been destroyed by the new dynasty which succeeded him. But there is now no possibility of questioning the correctness of the Scripture on this matter. Shalmaneser's name has been found on a bronze weight. It is in the shape of a lion. The inscription runs as follows:—

Palace of Sal [ma-nu]-assaridu, king of Assyria

Two *manu* of the king.

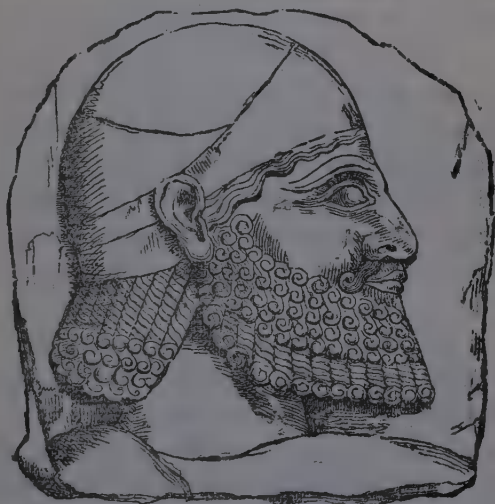
There are also several Assyrian contracts dated in his reign, one of them dated "in the second year of Shalmaneser IV." He is also mentioned in the Eponym Canon. In the notice for the year 727 B.C., we find the words: "Salmanasar is seated upon the throne." He himself also takes his place as Eponym (or Consul) for the year 723 B.C., where we read:—"In the Eponymy of Salmanu-asarid, king of Assyria. . ."

To this we have to add the following from the Babylonian Chronicle:—

"On the 25th day of Tebet, Salmanu-asarid sat on the throne in Assyria. He destroyed Sabara'in."* This is all, with the exception of the notice to which we shall refer immediately, that Assyriology can, up to the present moment, tell us concerning Shalmaneser IV. It is the Scripture alone that enables us to place this man among the active and enterprising monarchs of Assyria; and, here also, we may recall the words of Schrader and say: "The cuneiform records and the Bible here supplement each other in a manner that leaves nothing to be desired." "It is, therefore, from the Old Testament," writes Dr. Pinches, "that we get the fullest history of the reign of this king. How it is that no records have been found is not known. They may have been destroyed, or nothing very extensive may have been written. That at least something of the kind existed is indicated by the fact that the late George Smith refers to at least one document, the whereabouts of which at present is not known. What," he adds, "may have

* Dr. Pinches, *The Old Testament*, etc., p. 358.

been the relationship of Shalmaneser IV. of Assyria to Tiglath-pileser is not known. There is every probability that, like his great predecessor, he was an adventurer, who, taking advantage of his popularity with the army, and the failing powers of his royal master, seized the throne.”* The remaining notice mentioned above tells us of his death and of



ASSYRIAN HEAD (*from the Monuments.*)

the enthronement of his great successor. It runs as follows:—

“In the fifth year Sulmanu-asarid died in the month Tebet. Salmanu-asarid had ruled the kingdom of Akkad and Assur for five years. In the month Tebet, the twelfth day, Sargon sat on the throne in Assur, and in the month Nisan, Marduk-abla-iddina (Mero-dach-baladan) sat on the throne in Babylon.”

* Page 359.

This mention of Sargon recalls another vindication of the Scripture; for nowhere else in literature has his name been preserved. A prophecy of Isaiah's (xx. 1) is dated in the following fashion: "In the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod, when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him, and fought against Ashdod and took it." It was in vain that the older commentators sought for information regarding Tartan and Sargon. There was no help for them in any other source than these few words of the Scripture. To simple faith, the inferences to be drawn were very clear. Sargon was an Assyrian king for whom a place had to be found, and Tartan was a general to whom the command of his armies was for the time deputed. But, in the utter silence of profane history regarding this new king, commentators and scholars declined to follow the distinct indication of the Scripture. It was taken for granted that in a matter of this kind profane history must be respected even in its silences. In other words, what it did not know was not knowledge. The Scripture information was, therefore, a difficulty and a burden that must be got rid of in some way; and the way which seemed beset with the fewest difficulties was to identify Sargon with one of the monarchs already known to history. Old Matthew Poole gives all that was then known and guessed in the following comment on Isa. xx. 1. He writes: "*Tartan*; a great commander in Sennacherib's army, 2 Kings xviii. 17." [This official title is here supposed to be a proper name]. . . . "*Sargon*; what king of Assyria this was is much disputed. It is well known and

confessed that one and the same person hath frequently several names . . . and, therefore, this may be either (1) Shalmaneser, who, when he took Samaria might also by Tartan take this place. Or (2) Sennacherib. . . . Or (3) Esarhaddon, Sennacherib's son, who, by cutting off the first letter, is called *Sarchedon* (Tob.i.21); and thence possibly, by abbreviation, *Sargon*," etc.

Knowledge as to who this king was had utterly perished among the Jews, the hereditary custodians of the Old Testament. Their learned men were more anxious to hand down their own fancies than the information which was once fully possessed by the Jews. The best explanation which Jerome could gather from them was that Sargon had seven names, and that he was to be



ASSYRIAN REPRESENTATION OF
ANCIENT CITY.

(From the Monuments).

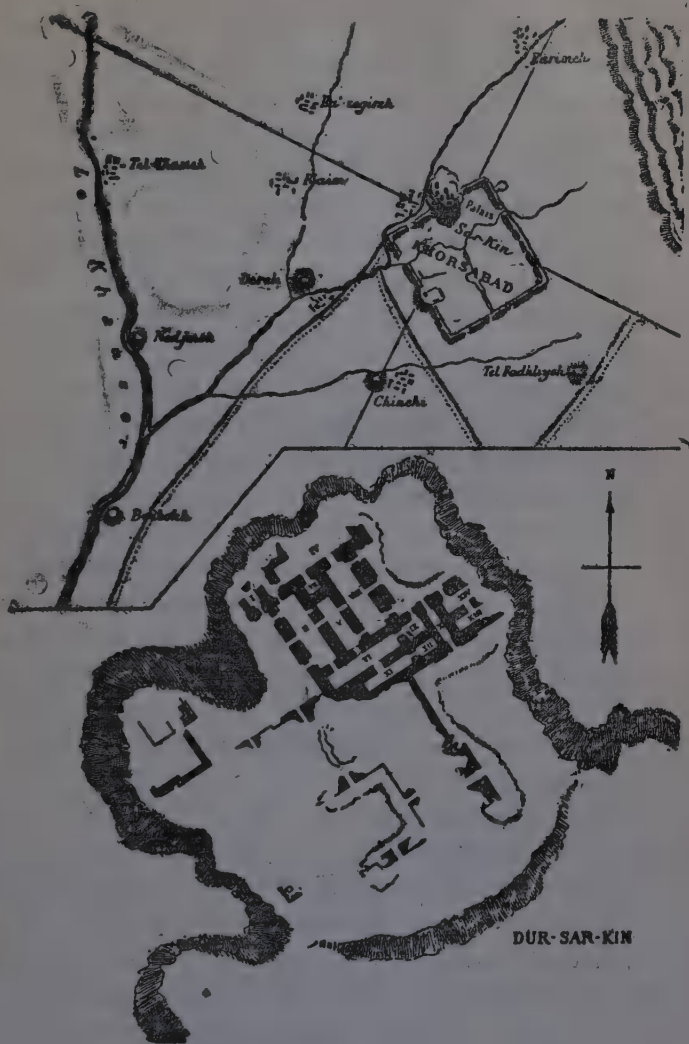
identified with one or other of the Assyrian monarchs elsewhere mentioned in the Bible. By the time Kimchi had written, and the Talmud had been compiled, Sargon's seven names had increased to eight.

So improbable, however, did all these explanations appear to some scholars, that they held Sargon to be a distinct king, and that his reign was to be placed

between Shalmaneser's and Sennacherib's. One of the very earliest results of Assyrian excavation proved this to be the truth. Botta, French Consul at Mosul, after some unsuccessful excavations elsewhere, began digging at Khorsabad. The results not only surprised the excavators and himself, but also became everywhere the sensation of the time. He came upon the foundations of an immense building. He laid bare gigantic winged bulls, chambers with sculptured walls, and numerous inscriptions. He had brought back to the light of day all that remained of the palace of Sargon, the father of Sennacherib, and the founder of one of the greatest of Assyrian dynasties. These early excavations brought to the Bible their first fruits of confirmation. "The name of Sargon," says Dr. Sayce, "occurs once only in the Old Testament. In Isaiah xx. 1, it is said that Sargon the king of Assyria sent his *Tartan*, or commander-in-chief, against Ashdod, and that city was taken by the Assyrian general. The statement is in full accordance with what we learn from the annals of Sargon himself. Akhimib, whom Sargon had appointed king of Ashdod, had been dethroned, and the crown given to a usurper, who seems to have been a nominee of Hezekiah. As the usurper is called Yavan, or 'the Greek,' it would appear that Greeks were already settled in this part of Palestine, and that Hezekiah had found in them allies against the Philistines."*

"It is remarkable," says Mr. H. S. Robertson, "that nowhere else in the whole Bible is King

* *The Higher Criticism versus the Monuments*, pp. 424, 425.



PLAN OF THE RUINS OF SARGON'S PALACE.

Sargon named—a fact that will seem all the more surprising when we come to consider how mighty and influential a sovereign he was. But this is not nearly all; for, not only is Sargon mentioned in no other verse in the Bible than this, but no other ancient writer has preserved for us the slightest memory of him. Neither Greek nor Roman, Persian nor Arab, ever refers to this mighty monarch. Save for the passing and parenthetical notice of him in Isaiah, the world for twenty or more centuries would have been utterly unaware that he had ever existed.

“Had, then, a hostile critic chosen to affirm that the name of Sargon, and the incident referred to, were entirely imaginary, it would have been, till recently, difficult to confute him. But the discoveries in Assyria have entirely altered the state of the case. Not only do we find abundant proof that a king, named Sargon, existed at this time; but we can still gaze upon the wonderful remains he left behind him in Assyria, and we can read among his records an account of the very episode referred to by the prophet Isaiah.” *

Sargon was a great builder as well as a victorious general. To Asshur, one of the earliest capitals of Assyria, succeeded Kalah, or Calah. The latter, till Sargon's time, had continued to be the capital of the kingdom. But Sargon resolved to found a new capital, which was to bear his own name and to hand it down to posterity. It was called “Fort-Sargon,” Dûr-Sharûkin. “‘Day and night,’ he tells us, ‘I

* *Voices of the Past*, pp. 186, 187.

planned the building of that city, and gave orders to erect within it a sanctuary for the sun-god, the great judge of the great gods, who caused me to gain victory.' And, again! 'Day and night I planned and arranged for the peopling of that city, and the erection of sanctuaries as the dwelling of the great



ASSYRIAN HUNTING SCENE (*from the Monuments.*)

gods, and palaces as the seat of my sovereignty; and I gave orders for the work (to be commenced).'

"The site he selected was that of a very ancient town which had once flourished at the foot of a mountain, a few miles to the north of Nineveh; but which, owing to the neglect, and consequent choking up of its canal, had fallen into utter ruin. To us moderns, a special interest attaches to the new city

planted there by Sargon, for it now lies entombed in the mound of Khorsabad, which was excavated in 1842, by Monsieur Botta, and was the first place to yield in quantity those wonderful Assyrian discoveries which have so distinguished our own century. Not only was it the first spot where important excavations were made, but many of the very finest monuments, which now adorn the museums of Europe, came from this Khorsabad mound." *

Sargon gives other indications of the care expended upon the arrangements of his new city. There is still a question between Assyriologists and the Bible as to the origin of the word "Paradise." The critics have long ago concluded that this is a Persian word, and that the Book, therefore, in which it is used must be of late origin—a vital point for the critical case. If a Persian word appears in it, that, they contend, proves that it must belong to a time when Persian words had entered into Hebrew speech; in other words, to the time of the Persian dominion. There has been a little wavering on the part of later Assyriologists, and Delitzsch has suggested that the word after all may be Semitic, and of Babylono-Assyrian origin. Schrader has replied: "that we have no evidence that the Assyrians formed parks like these in Palestine, and the supposition is hardly probable."† It cannot be said, however, that later researches support Schrader's position, and the probability is great that this critical contention will shortly be proved to be another critical blunder.

* *Ibid.*, pp. 193, 194. † Vol. II., p. 71.

"Assyrian kings," says Robertson, "*had a great love of parks*, and felt special pleasure in imitating in these enclosures the forest scenery of the mountainous parts of their own and foreign lands. So Sargon began his great undertaking, by planting round the site of the city he was about to create, a vast artificial forest, in which, he says, was 'every kind of timber that grows in the land of Khatti (that is, the west-country), and every kind of mountain herbs.' " *

It is also interesting to note that Sargon's testimony bears heavily against another critical imagination, and one which the critics have turned into a foundation-stone for their re-constructed Bible. This is that the notion that the gods have anything to do with morality is a late step in the evolution of religion. But, apparently, notions of what is right and just have not only been bound up in Assyria with conceptions of the gods from time immemorial; but, according to Sargon, the gods are also *specially* concerned for the maintenance of justice. They appoint kings, says Sargon, *that* they may fulfil this very end and "defend right and justice." He says, while speaking of the building of his city: "'In accordance with the name I bear' (for the name Sargon can be so read in Assyrian as to mean 'the faithful king,') 'and which the great gods conferred upon me that I might defend right and justice, direct the powerless, and not harm the weak; I paid in silver and copper the price of the land for the city, according to the tablets appraising its value, to the owners thereof; and in order to do

* *Voices of the Past*, p. 194.

no wrong, I gave to those who did not wish money for their land, a piece of ground situated opposite to their original property.'''*

Before leaving these glimpses of a great career, which Sargon has himself afforded us, it may be well to note one thing more which he says about his new city. When the walls, the fortresses, the palace, and the homes were built, another problem presented itself. Where were the new inhabitants to be secured? It cost Sargon, however, little trouble to find a solution of that problem. The new policy and extensive conquests speedily provided the inhabitants. "People," he says, "from the four quarters of the world, of foreign tongues and various speech, who had dwelt in mountain and plain, wheresoever the warrior of the gods, the lord of all, bears sway, and whom I, in the name of Asshur, my lord, by the might of my arms, had carried into captivity, I commanded to speak one language, and settled them therein. Sons of Asshur (that is, Assyrians), of wise insight into all things, learned men and scribes, I set over them to keep watch over the fear of God and the King."† In this way the policy that rooted up the nations brought about its own punishment. Assyria lost its unity, its sense of brotherhood, and its love of country. In these lay its power for endurance, and for resistance to an invading foe. And just as this power was being more and more reduced, Assyria was preparing for its extinction.

Among the monuments exhumed at Khorsabad

* *Ibid.*, p. 195. † *Ibid.*, p. 198.

was one which recorded the very expedition spoken of by Isaiah. George Smith gives the following translation:—

“In my ninth expedition to the land beside the great sea, to Philistia and Ashdod I went. Azuri, king of Ashdod, not to bring tribute his heart hardened, and to the kings round him, enemies of Assyria, he sent, and did evil,” &c.* Dr. Pinches, from a fuller text, gives the following rendering: “Azuri, king of Ashdudu, planned in his heart not to send tribute, and sent to the kings around hostile expressions (towards) the land of Assur, and on account of what he had done, I changed his dominion over the people of his land. Ahi-miti, his brother next in order, I appointed to the kingdom over them. Men of Hatti, speaking treachery, hated his dominion, and raised up over them Yatna, a usurper, who, like themselves, knew no reverence for the dominion. In the anger of my heart I went with the chariot of my feet and my cavalry, which for security quit not my side, to the city Ashdudu, the city Gimtu (and) the city Ashdudrimnu I besieged (and) captured. The gods dwelling in the midst of them, himself, with the people of his land, gold, silver (and) the property of his palace, I counted as spoil. Their cities I rebuilt, and settled therein the people of the lands captured by my hands. I placed my commander-in-chief as governor over them, and counted them with the people of my land, and they bore my yoke.”†

Here Sargon speaks as if he himself had been

* *Assyrian Discoveries*, pp. 289, 290. † *The Old Testament*, pp. 369, 370.

present, had personally triumphed, and had personally arranged everything. "In the anger of my heart," he says, "I went with the chariot of my feet," &c. This is quite opposed to the statements of the Scripture, which, as we have seen, says that Sargon was not present, but had sent the Tartan in command of the army. If the above inscription had stood alone, and had formed the only Assyrian record dealing with this event, there can be little doubt that we should have had here another Bible difficulty, and that any attempt to explain that whatever was done by the king's order was done by himself would have been set down as special pleading quite unworthy of any teacher of the truth, or of any seeker after it. But fortunately for those weak brethren who are so ready to doubt, and even to condemn, the Bible, Sargon's inscription is not our only native source of information. In a reference to this campaign, Prof. Sayce remarks that Sargon "did not take part in it himself. The Book of Isaiah," he continues, "tells us that the campaign against Ashdod was conducted by the commander-in-chief of the Assyrian monarch; and in strict accordance with this, the Assyrian annals describe the king as spending the whole year 'at home.' Moreover, his attention was centred on a more important war, and a more difficult conquest than that of Judah or Ashdod." *

This was his re-conquest of Babylon, which had once more asserted its independence. But are we to attribute misrepresentation to Sargon in speaking in the inscription just quoted, as if he had personally

* *The Higher Criticism versus the Monuments*, p. 427.

superintended all the operations? Here, what would be set aside as special pleading if urged on behalf of Bible statements, will be accepted without scruple in exoneration of the Assyrian monarch. When we read that James Sixth and First beheaded Sir Walter Raleigh, no one imagines the record to mean that the king personally decapitated him. Nor are we compelled by the statement that Elizabeth condemned the Duke of Norfolk to the block to believe that the queen personally pronounced sentence upon him. The orders carried out by the commander-in-chief were Sargon's; and it was his power that overthrew Ashdod; it was he who pronounced its doom, and who gathered its spoils.

There is a special reason why Sargon's name should be introduced here; for just in this very way are they mixed up in the Assyrian records in connection with the fall of Samaria. Sargon claims to have captured the city, and to have led off more than 20,000 of the inhabitants into captivity. Apparently, after Hoshea their king had been detained and imprisoned by the Assyrian king, the nobles of Samaria had resolved to resist. Their preparations for the now inevitable siege must necessarily have been hurried, but they nevertheless seem to have been effective. Provisions had been drawn from every possible quarter, and munitions of war were procured, probably from Tyre, with which the rebellion seems, from the statement quoted from Menander the Tyrian historian, to have been concerted. This is shown in that three years' resistance during which the practised and daring soldiery of

Assyria were kept outside the walls of the besieged city. But the expected help did not come from Egypt. Sargon was no doubt well content that the Assyrian forces should waste their strength before the walls of Samaria, and that the rush of this invasion should be broken by its stubborn resistance. The politics of antiquity were even more cold-blooded and heartless than those of modern times.

Samaria fell, and with it fell the dominion founded by Jeroboam. The northern kingdom—the kingdom of Israel—ceased to exist. We shall peruse immediately Sargon's inscription, which gives us the confirmation from the Assyrian royal archives of the Scripture statements. Meanwhile, a word must be said as to how it is that Sargon claims the triumph. Shalmaneser seems to have died about the very time of the fall of Samaria. There are two references in 2 Kings to the capture of the city. In xvii. 6 we read: "In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria." Here the king is not named. But just three verses before, Shalmaneser is spoken of, and it seems to be a warrantable, although by no means an absolutely necessary, inference, that it is one and the same king of Assyria who is spoken of throughout. This would mean, therefore, that the capture was to be ascribed to Shalmaneser. In xviii. 9, 10 we have the following account: "And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Hezekiah, which was the seventh year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against Samaria and besieged it.

And at the end of three years they took it; even in



SARGON, KING OF ASSYRIA.

sixth year of Hezekiah, that is in the ninth year

of Hoshea king of Israel, Samaria was taken." The reader will observe the very unusual phrase—"they took it." Here it seems to be indicated that supreme authority had for the moment disappeared, and that, though the siege was begun and carried on by the king, it was not completed by him. Now, all this is fully explained by the monuments. It was in this very year that Shalmaneser died, whether by assassination or not we do not know. There appears to have been a subsequent time of confusion. The conspirators in Assyria, where Shalmaneser appears to have come to his end, were unable to elevate their nominee to the throne. This interregnum lasted for two years; for while in one inscription Sargon speaks of a certain expedition as having been made in his ninth year, it is stated in another inscription to have happened in his eleventh year. "This," says George Smith, "makes a variation of two years as to the accession of Sargon, the one copy leading to the date B.C. 722, while the other favours B.C. 720," that is, for Sargon's accession. "Shalmaneser, the predecessor of Sargon," continues Mr. Smith, "had died B.C. 722, but it is possible some heir to the throne may have stood in the way of Sargon during the first two years of his rule."

The whole would find an easy explanation if Sargon had been in command in Palestine; and had, in the last days at least, personally conducted the siege of Samaria. He could then speak as king of the triumphs which he had won as a general; and he may have assumed even then the royal prerogatives, although he was not

acknowledged as sovereign in Assyria itself until rival claimants had been suppressed. But, in any case, the records show that in these words of the Bible—"they took it"—we find the very impress of the time. The writer does not explain. He says nothing about Shalmaneser's death, and the disorders that succeeded. Our attention is kept fixed and concentrated upon Israel's fall. There are lessons there which the Scripture will not have us miss. But, while Assyria's history is not told, it is reflected; and the shaping of a phrase will convey a hint down the ages through which he who meditates upon the Word may still discern the truth.

CHAPTER X.

THE DISPERSION OF ISRAEL.

WE have just seen that we are told in 2 Kings xvii. 6 that "the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes."

The policy invented by Tiglath-pileser afforded to Assyrian conquerors too easy a solution of the difficulties attending remote conquests to be discarded. It was continued, not only by Shalmaneser and by Sargon, but also by later Assyrian and Babylonian kings. In the great inscription recording his triumphs, Sargon says: "I besieged and captured Samerina

(Samaria); 27,290 people, dwelling in the midst of it, I carried off. Fifty chariots I collected among them, and allowed them to have the rest of their goods. My commander-in-chief I placed over them, and imposed upon them the tribute of the former king.”* In another inscription on his palace walls, which is much injured, we read: “. . . of me . . . [I besieged and captured the town of Samaria; (27,290) of their inhabitants] I carried away: fifty chariots I took as my royal share . . . in place of (them, the deported) I assigned abodes to the inhabitants of countries taken [by me]. I imposed tribute on them like Assyria.”† “We learn from the above passage,” writes Schrader, that Sargon himself, after deporting the Israelites, settled other subjugated races in the abodes which they left. This notice serves to confirm a conjecture I once threw out quite independently of the cuneiform records, and based simply on a critical examination of the Books of Kings. My supposition was that the king who, according to verse 24 in this chapter, transferred people from Babel, Kutha, etc., into the districts long occupied by the Israelites, and who is generally held to be Asarhaddon, is the same as he who transported the Israelites, that is, not Salmanasar, as I formerly imagined before I was better informed, but, as we now know, Sargon.”‡

The places here named as the new abodes of the Israelites are Halah, Habor, Gozan, and the cities of the Medes. Concerning the three first localities there

* Pinches, *The Old Testament*, p. 363. † Schrader, vol. i., pp. 264-266.

‡ Pages 266, 267.

have been many guesses. Sir Henry Rawlinson was inclined to identify Halah with the Sar-Pali-Zohab pass in Kurdistan. But the more likely opinion is that Halah, Habor, and Gozan are to be found in Mesopotamia. "If we can find Habor," writes Ainsworth, in his narrative of *The Euphrates Expedition*, we get nigh to Halah, whether Habor be a city or a river, or, as is more likely, both. Gozan simply signifies pastures, or pasture land, and the banks of the Khabūr are far more renowned pasture-lands amongst the Arabs than are the Zozans, or Gozans—the alpine, summer pastures of the Khaldæans. The Romans also called the province Gauzanitis.

"The wonderful discovery made by Sir Austin Henry Layard, of Assyrian remains on the banks, testifies that the valley was dotted with cities and towns in their time, as it is well known that it constituted their (the Assyrian) high-road in their frequent invasions of Palestine and Egypt. The identity of the Habor of the Old Testament with the Khabūr, is further established by its being mentioned in 2 Kings xix. 12, in connection with Haran (still so-called), and Rezeph—a well-known marble city on the high road from Tadmor (Palmyra) to Thipsah (Thapsacus)." *

"To the Chebar," says Layard, "were transported by the Assyrian king, after the destruction of Samaria, the captive children of Israel, and on its banks 'the heavens were opened' to Ezekiel, and 'he saw visions of God,' and spake his prophecies to his brother exiles. Around Arban may have been pitched the

* Vol. i., pp. 340, 341.

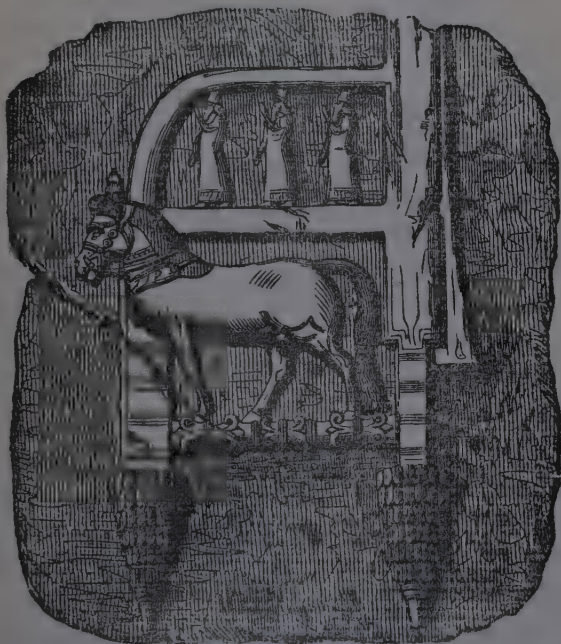
tents of the sorrowing Jews, as those of the Arabs were, during my visit. To the same pastures they led their sheep, and they drank the same waters. Then the banks of the river were covered with towns and villages, and a palace-temple still stood on the mound, reflected in the transparent stream."

These words afford us a vivid glimpse of the kind of territory to which the Israelites were carried, but that was not the sphere in which the prophet toiled. It is a very attractive identification to make the scene of Israel's exile that of the labours of Ezekiel. It would then have been shown, indeed, that God had not cast the exiles away when His prophet was sent with the Divine message to their children. But the name of the Chebar, where Ezekiel laboured, differs thoroughly in the Hebrew from that of the Khabōr, or Habōr, to which the inhabitants of Samaria were carried. The Chebar was in Babylonia in the south, and the Habor in Mesopotamia in the north; and, though cities and scenery may have resembled each other, hundreds of miles lay between them. Recent scholars of considerable name have repeated this identification; but it is one that must now be definitely abandoned. The following, also from the pen of Layard, brings us, however, to the real scene of the captivity of a part of the ten tribes. "We know," he says, "that Jews still lingered in the cities of the Khabūr until long after the Arab invasion; and we may, perhaps, recognise in the Jewish communities of Ras al Aīn, at the sources of the river, and of Karkisia or Carchemish, at its con-

The Dispersion of Israel.

fluence with the Euphrates, visited and described by Benjamin, of Tudela, in the latter end of the twelfth century of the Christian era, the descendants of the captive Israelites."

Halah is now generally identified with a place called Gla, a mere mound of ruins, situated on the



THE THRONE OF SARGON (*from the Monuments*).

upper part of the river Khabūr. The name is found in an Assyrian list of towns in Mesopotamia under the form of *Halahu*. The Assyrian name for the Khabor is also identical with that in the Bible. It is called *Habūr*. It is a river that flows into the

Euphrates, and gathers into itself the waters of streams which flow from the mountain chain called Masuis, by the ancient geographers, but which now bears the name of Kharadja Dagħ. The river, in its lower course, as seen by Layard, "flowed through rich meads covered with flowers. . . . The country on both sides of the river was covered with mounds, the remains of cities belonging to the Assyrian period."* The name of Gozan is also found on the Assyrian monuments under the form Guza-a-an. It was the name both of a country and of one of its cities. It occurs in the same geographical list in which we meet the name of Halah. A discovery made in Babylon, which led to so many of what have been called "the Egibi tablets" finding their way to the British Museum, has thrown some light upon the condition of many of these Israelitish captives. Among those documents is a contract made about this very time—in the reign of Sargon, in 708 B.C., about fourteen years after the Israelites were transported to Assyria. It is a deed of sale by which a Phenician hands over to an Egyptian for a certain amount two Israelitish men and an Israelitish woman. The woman's name is illegible; but the names of the men are Heman and Melchior. The contract is witnessed and sealed with all the legal formalities which attended these ancient transactions—formalities quite as elaborate as those which characterise our own legal documents. The price paid was three minas of silver (about £27). It is

* Professor Rawlinson in *Smith's Dictionary of the Bible*.

stipulated in the document that each of these minas is to be "according to the usage of the city of Carchemish." "The price," says the contract, "has been definitely fixed. These persons have been paid for and bought. Withdrawal from the contract and annulling of the contract are not permitted." It also provides that if, at any time afterwards—"in the days of the son, or of the grandson" of the purchaser, the seller, or his heirs, wish to buy back these individuals (or their descendants), the price to be paid will be "ten minas of silver and a mina of gold" (about, in all, £230).

This condition of perpetual slavery may not have been the general lot; but this incident proves that it must have been the lot of multitudes. The Israelites had refused to accept the glad and ennobling service of God; and now the Divine protection was withdrawn, and they had to taste the bitterness, and know the degradation, of the servitude of man.

Their fate is held up before us as a warning; and the record of it testifies that this warning rests upon facts. Here we have no pious fiction, and no blundering, muddling tradition. We have been led, in these last days, to Sargon's city. We have been made to read his testimony upon his palace walls. The captives, we now know, were carried off as the Bible says they were. The places named in the Scripture were under the control of the king, and were bearing then the very same names in the records of the time. These places were also grouped together in Mesopotamia, to the north of Assyria, as the Scripture

implies that they were. And we now know further that Israelitish men and women were bought and sold like cattle in Babylonia in the later years of this very king who carried them away from Samaria. Tested here by discovery, which no man could have foreseen, the Word of God is proved once more to be an absolutely exact and truthful Witness.

CHAPTER XI.

THE NEW INHABITANTS OF SAMARIA.

THE carrying out of the new policy in Samaria involved the planting of a fresh population in the desolated country and city. We accordingly read that "The king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cutha, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and planted them in the cities of Samaria, instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria and dwelt in the cities thereof" (2 Kings xviii. 24).

We do not find in Sargon's inscriptions any statement which exactly repeats this made by the Scripture. But we repeatedly encounter passages which remind us of it, and confirm it. The number which Sargon gives of the captives led away from Samaria (20,290) cannot have been the whole of the population which he removed. It appears from his inscriptions that he had, on the contrary, so depopu-

lated the country that he is constantly remembering its needs, and pouring in new settlers from his after conquests. In 715 B.C., seven years after the capture of the city, he sends recruits from Arabia. He says: "The Tamudu, the Ibadidi, the Marsimani, and the Hayapa, distant tribes of Arabia, who inhabit the desert of which the scholars and the scribes had no knowledge, and who to no king had rendered tribute; with the protection of Assur, my lord, I destroyed them, and those who remained I transported, and in the city of Samaria I placed them. From Pharaoh, king of Egypt, from Samsieh, queen of Arabia, and from Ithamar the Sabæan, monarchs, who dwell on the shore of the sea and in the desert . . . gold, produce of the mountains, precious stones, ivory . . . wood, perfumes of every kind, horses, and camels, their tribute I received." In another inscription he refers to the same campaign: "Conqueror of the Tamudu, Ibadidi, Marsimani and Hayapa, who the rest of them enslaved, and caused them to be placed in the land of Beth Omri" (Samaria).*

The numbers of these new colonists were, probably, small. It will be noted that no figures are given, and the omission seems to indicate that their magnitude was not enough to boast of. This may also be gathered from the silence of the Scripture. That there were Arabians among the new inhabitants of Damascus is shown by the repeated mention of "Geshem the Arabian" by Nehemiah in his references to the Samaritan leaders. But, in proportion to the

* See George Smith, *The Assyrian Eponym Canon*, pp. 128, 129.

rest, these must have been comparatively insignificant; and, consequently, the Scripture confines itself to mentioning the origin of the great majority of the inhabitants. The notices we have just quoted are, nevertheless, important, since they show that for years the re-peopling of the former territory of the ten tribes was a constant concern to the Assyrian conqueror. Sargon's inscriptions, however, contain still more direct confirmations. The first colonists named by the Scripture are those from Babylon. This means that there had been war between the Assyrians and the Babylonians; and that the war had arisen *after*, and yet not long after, the capture of Samaria. Was there, then, such a war in the south of the Assyrian empire? and did the conquest of Babylon happen just as Samaria was demanding a fresh population? Sargon's own inscriptions contain a full reply. There *was* war between Assyria and Babylon. It resulted in the capture of the great city of the Euphrates, and in the carrying away of a number of its inhabitants. These events took place also *in Sargon's first year*, just after the taking of Samaria. Commenting on the words, "From Babylon," in 2 Kings xviii. 24, Schrader says: "We have, at least, an indirect confirmation of this in the cuneiform texts. We read in the annals of Sargon, and here again in the report he gives of his first year: . . . '(Merodach-Baladan), whom since he, not according to the will of the gods, the rule over Babel [had seized for himself, I overcame in war and smote] . . . 7 inhabitants together with their property I

transported and settled them [in the land] Chatti (that is, Syria-Palestine).’ It may be assumed,” Schrader adds, “that Samaria was one of the spots to which the transportation took place.”* In Sargon’s time the term, “the land of Chatti,” that is, “the land of the Hittites,” was extended in its signification, and included northern Palestine, and the territory of Samaria. Sargon calls the Philistine city of Ashdod, for instance, a Hittite city. Under Sennacherib, and his son Esarhaddon, the name “is altogether transferred to the countries on the coast, Canaan and Philistia, as well as to Edom, Moab, and Ammon.”† If these captives from Babylon were placed in Samaria, this would come under the description, “the land of the Hittites.” The reader will have noted that the number of these unwilling colonists is not now found on Sargon’s monument. The whole number has disappeared with the exception of the last figure, seven. But the number was large enough to be recorded among the other evidences of the completeness of his triumphs.

As to Cutha, the information of Jews and Christians was like that of Sargon’s scholars and scribes regarding the distant peoples of Arabia. The locality of the city was quite unknown. Josephus places it in the centre of Persia. Knobel and Winer, as well as some earlier scholars, believed it to be in Susiana. Rosenmüller was of opinion that it was to be found in Arabia. All these learned surmisings are now at an end. Mr. Rassam, in the course of his explorations

* Vol. I., pp. 268, 269. † Vol. I., pp. 92, 93.

in Chaldea, found the site of Cutha at Tell-Ibrahim, about ten miles to the north-east of Babylon. The name appears in the Assyrian inscriptions. On the obelisk of Shalmaneser II. we read: "I offered rich sacrifices at Babylon, at Borsippa, and at Cutha." "We see from this passage," writes Schrader, "that the town with which we are now concerned was situated in Middle-Babylonia, and this conjecture has in the meantime been corroborated from the monuments. Considerable remains of buildings, rooms, and halls (passages) have been brought to light by Hormuzd Rassam, at Tell-Ibrâhîm, north-east of Babylon, in the southern portion of the larger of the two mounds of ruins."* The position of the city, all knowledge of which had perished so early that so well informed a writer as Josephus was in complete ignorance as to its situation, thus throws welcome light upon the Bible statement. Cutha had, no doubt, been concerned in the insurrection against Assyria, and was involved in the overthrow which terminated the brief struggle. The men of Cutha seem to have formed the greatest number of the new settlers, as the name 'Cutheans' was applied by the Jews to all the Samaritans. They are spoken of in this way in the Talmud, and Josephus explains that "those whom the Hebrews name in their language Cutheans, are those who are called in Greek Samaritans." †

Our information regarding "Sepharvaim" is still fuller. The Hebrew word is in the Dual, that special form of the plural which indicates that two, and two

* Page 271. † Vigouroux, *La Bible et les Decouvertes Modernes*, III., 571.

only, are spoken of. The word really means "the two Sipars," or "Double-Sipar." Accordingly, if we are to go by the name, this must have been in some way a double town. Some hints were handed down from ancient times regarding this city. Abydenus tells that Berossus, the historian of Babylon, speaks of a city called Sippara. After naming Sisuthrus, the last of the ten great monarchs of the antediluvian world, he says: "To him the deity Cronos foretold that, on the fifteenth day of the month Desius, there would be a Deluge, and commanded him to deposit all the writings whatever that he had in the city of the Sun in Sippara." Sippar was, therefore, according to Berossus, an antediluvian city. Abydenus himself calls it the "city of the Sipparenians," and says that Nebuchadnezzar excavated a vast lake in the neighbourhood of it for the purpose of supplying water for the irrigation of the country. Pliny calls it a town of the Hipparenians, and says that it was a great seat of Chaldaic learning. The recovered records of Babylonia have now carried us farther than our ancient instructors. Sepharvaim, says Schrader, "is likewise a Babylonian town . . . and moreover occurs in the inscriptions in the form 'Sipar,' 'Sippar.'" There is an indication that the statement of Berossus as to its great antiquity has some foundation. It is referred to in the old Accadian—"the old non-Semitic language of Babylonia—as 'the Euphrates city.'" "The city lay on the left, or eastern bank of the Euphrates. . . . It has been discovered by Hormuzd Rassam in the ruin-mounds of Abu Habba . . . somewhat to the

east of the present bed of the Euphrates-stream. This explorer laid bare the walls of a building of considerable size, which turned out to be the celebrated temple of the Sun at Sipar - Heliopolis. In a spacious chamber, or hall, in which stood a large altar, Rassam discovered in a box, deposited beneath the floor, and made of burnt clay, several clay documents, one of which began with the words : ' Image of the sun-god, the great lord who dwells in I'(Bit)-Parra (' temple of light '), which is at Sippar.' " * " I have been puzzled," says Mr. Rassam, " to determine why these relics were buried in asphalt pavement ; because if those who hid them there wished to preserve them from destruction by the enemy, they could not have placed them in a more conspicuous place ; for a man who is accustomed to the mode of Assyrian paving could not help noticing the difference. This discovery at the outset was most fortunate, as it proved to us the exact site of the temple and city of Sippara." †

Sipar, or Siphar, or Sephar, was therefore a well-known and important city in Babylonia in the time of Sargon. But were there twin cities, as is so plainly intimated in the Scripture name ? Here is the answer of the Assyrian monuments : " In the passage Layard 17, 4, the town is called *ir Sippar sa Samas*, that is ' Sippar of the Sun.' . . . It is to be observed, however, that there was a second divinity, Anunit, specially worshipped in Sipar. Accordingly, the Assyrians, or else the Babylonians, made a distinction.

* Schrader, vol. i., pp. 272, 273.

† *Transactions of the Victoria Institute*, vol. xvii., p. 225.

Besides Sipar, or Sipar sa Samas, 'Sippar of the sun-god,' they mention a *Sipar sa Anunituv*. . . . It is in this way 'Double-Sipar' of the Hebrew becomes intelligible. . . . It is conjectured by Rassam that in the neighbouring Dair there may be found the other Sipar which was devoted to the cultus (worship) of Anunit.*

"The Hebrew Sepharvaim and the Babylonian Sippara," says Mr. Boscawen, "are both dual forms, and indicate the double nature of the city, which is quite borne out by Mr. Rassam's discoveries. Adjacent to the temple of the sun-god there were found several decorated in black and white; these were evidently part of the temple of the goddess Anat, whose attribute as Venus, the morning and evening star, would be symbolised by these colours."†

Nothing is yet known of Ava, the third city mentioned in the Scripture. "With respect to *Avva*," says Schrader, "no information is to be gained from the inscriptions defining its locality. On the other hand, there is once more perfect agreement between the inscriptions and the Bible in the notice of the latter respecting the deportation of inhabitants from *Hamath*, and their settlement in Samaria. For in the inscriptions of Sargon we read that the great king, after defeating, in the second year of his reign, Ilubid, of Hamath, separated from the spoil 200 chariots and 600 horsemen as his royal portion. From this we may infer that, as in the capture of Samaria, he must have carried away or deported the main body of the rest

* Schrader, pp. 272, 273. † *Transactions of the Victoria Institute*, vol. xvii., p. 241.

of the population into captivity. But from other passages . . . we learn that the king transferred into the region of Hamath, evidently depopulated by the transportation, other Eastern inhabitants (*ina kirib mat Amatti usisile*, 'in the midst of Hamath I settled them')."*

Hamath is frequently mentioned in the inscriptions from the time of Shalmaneser II. down to those of Sargon. It was one of the most important cities of Syria, and was strenuously contested for by every invader of the country. The name Hamath means a walled town, a place of strength; and the city was no doubt, to begin with, *the* fortified town of the district. The name was changed by the successors of Alexander the Great into Epiphania; and this change seems to have led certain scholars to confound this ancient city with Antioch, and with other towns in Syria. But the Bible name has all along lived on the lips of the people in that fertile district, and the place is called "Hamah" to-day. The district in which it lies is thus described by Ainsworth: "Advancing up the renowned valley of Cœle-Syria, its leading features may be summed up in a few words: a central sluggish river, with a tortuous course—expanding in places into lakelets—a level tract of greensward and marsh, along which courses the ancient highway, marked in places by Roman milestones, and on both sides ranges of hills, of moderate elevation, tame outline, and naked acclivities. . . Many of the marshy spots with lakelets owe their origin to abundant springs, which burst forth like

* Pages 273, 274.



HAMAH, THE MODERN REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ANCIENT HAMATH

rivulets at the foot of Mount Belus. The riches and renown of the cities of Cœle-Syria would at once attest to its capabilities and its importance of old, had not history shown that the different dominating nations in the East were ever contending for its possession." * Speaking of the town, Robinson says: "It lies on both sides of the Orontes, in the valley and on the acclivities. The population is estimated at not less than 30,000. One of the curiosities of the place are the immense Persian wheels, called Nâ'ûrah, for raising water to the upper town. Some of these are seventy or eighty feet in diameter, and raise the water to nearly that height, being driven by the force of the current. †

There are numerous inscriptions which have been discovered long ago at Hamath which no man as yet is able to read. They are in a picture-writing which bears a strong resemblance to the more ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics. But Sargon's inscriptions are in themselves sufficient confirmation of this Bible statement. We find him pouring in captives into Hamath. Why are these being transported thither? What has occasioned the need for a fresh population? He has answered this inquiry in an earlier inscription. As Schrader has already said, Sargon indicates that in his second year, that is, not long after the carrying away of the ten tribes, he had depopulated Hamath. What was done with the people of that district? The Scripture answers this question, and completes our information. The Hamathites were set down in

* *The Euphrates Expedition*, vol. i., p. 51. † *Biblical Researches*, vol. iii., p. 551.

Samaria by the side of the men from Babylon, from Cutha, from Ava, and from Sepharvaim. The comingling together in a conquered territory of far-sundered peoples, who had nothing in common, was part of the Assyrian policy; and so the new population was gathered in from the north, from the far south-east, and from the south-west—from Hamath, from Babylonia, and from Arabia.

CHAPTER XII.

SAMARIA'S NEW IDOLATRIES.

THE new settlers in Samaria brought with them the customs and the beliefs which they had received from their fathers. Unlike those into whose land they had now come, they had not broken with the traditions of their past, nor gone after strange gods. On the contrary, they gave what, in a better cause, we should have described as a touching proof of their fidelity. Their gods had been carried away by the victor as a choice part of his spoils. Deprived thus of the opportunity of approach to what they believed to be a Divine helper in a time of deepest calamity, they busied themselves at once with the making of the things that could not save. "Every nation," says the Scripture, "made gods of their own, and

put them in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in their cities wherein they dwelt. And the men of Babylon made Succoth-benoth, and the men of Cuth made Nergal, and the men of Hamath made Ashima, and the Avites made Nibhaz and Tartak, and the Sepharvites burnt their children in fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim" (2 Kings xvii. 29-31).

Here again, wherever research has shed light upon the religions of these cities and nations, that light displays the perfect accuracy of the Bible. "Succoth-benoth" was at first regarded as a compound Hebrew word, meaning "the tents of the daughters." But this is not satisfactory, even as a translation, and, in addition to this, the word is plainly intended to be taken as the name of a heathen god. *Succoth* occurs in Amos v. 26: "But ye have borne the tabernacle (Hebrew, *Succoth*) of your Moloch." Here *Succoth* has been understood by our translators as a Hebrew word, and translated "tabernacle," or "tent." But the more correct rendering is found in the margin, "*Succoth* your king." Schrader translates the verse: "Thus shall ye then take Succoth your king and Kēwān your star-god, your images which ye have made for yourselves, and I will carry you off into captivity;" and he adds in a note: "The meaning of the entire passage is: I take as little pleasure to-day in your burnt offerings and meal (meat) offerings (verses 22, 23), as formerly during the journey through the wilderness (verse 25), and the people will certainly not be able by such external ceremonial service to prevent the arrival of the judg-

ment (verse 24), which will befall both the people (verse 26), and the gods worshipped by them (verse 25), both of whom shall equally be destined to go into exile (verse 27).” *

Sak-kut was the name of an Assyrian divinity, and Schrader believes it to have been borrowed from the early Accadians. The original home of this god was, no doubt, in Babylon. The word may mean “Head of decision”—the god of destiny. But the divinity made in Samaria by the men of Babel seems to have been—not the god—but *the goddess* associated with Suk-koth or Sak-kut. She bears the name of Benith, a word almost identical with the Babylonian word Bânit. This word appears in the well-known term Zir-banit—*Banit*, “She who bestows;” and *Zir*, seed, that is, “The Bestower of posterity.” “She was,” says Schrader, “the consort of Merodach,” † the great god of Babylon. Further investigation will, no doubt make this still clearer; but, meanwhile, it is satisfactory to know that even a rationalistic Assyriologist, like Schrader, is impressed with the indications to which I have just referred. On the next statement, that “the men of Cuth made Nergal,” no obscurity now rests. What Schrader calls “an unexpected light” “has been thrown,” he says, “on this passage by the cuneiform inscriptions.” In sculptures representing lion-hunts, the usual name for the lion appears—*lik-mah*, which is explained in other inscriptions to mean “the great dog.” But in two identical inscriptions a change is made in the name, and instead

* Vol. II., p. 141. † Vol. I., p. 274.

of the word *lik-mah*, we read *Nirgalli*. Now "in both these passages," writes Schrader, "we have not to do with real lions, but with the lion-collossi (colossal lions) that adorn the palace-entrances, and which, therefore, represent the lion-deity. It is accordingly evident," he continues, "that Nirgal represented in Assyria the lion-god."* The reader will notice that these images are called *Nirgalli*—that is, Nergals.

Nirgal, or Nergal, was, therefore, an Assyrian and Babylonian divinity. But what of Cuth? Was the god identified in such a special way with this Babylonian city that its former inhabitants would make his image rather than that of any other of the many gods of Babylonia? A word list discovered a considerable time ago enables us to answer fully. In it "Nergal is expressly called the god of Kutha."† The inscriptions call this god of the Cutheans "the great hero, the king of combats, the master of battles, the champion of the gods, the god of the chase." We are also able to see for ourselves the very form of this so-called deity, which these new settlers placed in the old idolatrous shrines of Samaria. It was not that of the colossal images before Assyrian palace gates. These also bore the name and represented the divinity, but these were not the figures under which he was apparently worshipped. He is represented in a sculpture with a man's body, a lion's head, and holding a sword in his hand. A tradition of the Jewish rabbis shows how completely all knowledge as to what Nergal's form was had died out among the

* Vol. i., p. 275. † *Ibid.*

later Jews. The tradition referred to informs us that the Cuthean inhabitants of Samaria worshipped Nergal under the form of a cock. That is the kind of thing which, if the higher criticism were true, we should have found in the Bible; for they confidently assume that the Bible history is simply Jewish tradition, and Jewish tradition, too, into which have filtered the darkness and the blunders of times that had long ceased to be in actual contact with the things of which the traditions spoke. Now, that is perfectly true of the rabbinical tradition which would lead us to believe that Nergal, the god of Cutha, was figured under the form of a cock—a tradition which the discoveries I have just referred to have exploded and annihilated. But in regard to the Bible statement, this is absolutely false witness. It is once more shown here, as it has been shown everywhere, where the past has been recalled, that the Bible contains, not traditions, but fully informed and utterly reliable history.

Hamath was a Syrian, and not a Babylonian city; and as to Ava, we have already seen that we are awaiting further light. We can say little, therefore, of the gods which the transported dwellers of these cities made. "Yet the name *Nibhaz*," says Schrader, "shows by its formation an Assyrian origin; and the second name *Tartak* reminds us, in the first syllable, of names like *Tur-tan-u*; and in its second, of names such as *I-tak*." Even here, therefore, there is enough to indicate that these are not names coined by a Jewish imagination, but that they belong to the land and to the time to which the Bible assigns them.

But in the mention made of the gods of Sepharvaim, we are able once more to test Bible statements by actual facts. We are told here that the men of Sepharvaim "burnt their children in the fire to Adramelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim." Here two gods are named. This corresponds with the name "double Sipara," or Sepharvaim. Are these names, then, names of Babylonian deities? A second question is whether there was a two-fold worship connected with these twin cities, and whether these were the deities who were worshipped there? Assyriologists tell us that Adramelech is Adar-prince, and Ana-melech Anu-prince. These were among the great gods of Babylonia. The name Adar, according to Fr. Lenormant, meant originally "fire." This divinity is called in the inscriptions "the god who illumines the nations like the sun," "the luminary of the gods," and his name is sometimes accompanied by the ideogram of "wood" to represent the notion of "fire." The worship of Adar was widely spread in Babylonia and Assyria. He "played," says Prof. Sayce, "a conspicuous part in Babylonian, and more especially Assyrian, theology. He was regarded as emphatically the warrior and champion of the gods. . . . Originally, like Merodach, Adar had been a solar deity. We are distinctly told that he was 'the Meridian sun,' whose scorching heats represented the fiercer side of Baal-worship. But whereas Merodach was the sun conceived of as rising from the ocean-stream, Adar was the sun who issues forth from the shades of night. His wife accordingly is 'the lady

of the dawn.'” * Comparing the representations regarding Merodach, or Bel, and Adar, he says: “Each alike is the son and messenger of the older god. But whereas the errands upon which Merodach are sent are errands of mercy and benevolence, the errands of Adar are those that befit an implacable warrior. He contends not against the powers of darkness; it is against mankind, as in the story of the Deluge, that his arms are directed. He is the solar hero who belongs to the darkness and not to the light.” †

Along with Adrammelech the Sepharvaites had a second divinity—Anammelech. Each of the heathen gods was accompanied by a goddess; and it is natural to assume that in the case of the sun-god there was some greatly distinguished goddess of the sun who is here specially named as associated with Adrammelech. There was such a goddess who bore a name in part identical with Anammelech. This is the goddess Anounit. But in this case what is to be said of the latter part of the word? For in the Hebrew we have, not Anounit, but Ana. In similar words transferred from the Assyrian to the Hebrew, the *t* is dropped. *Idiklat*, the name of the Tigris, becomes, for example, *Hiddekel* in Genesis ii. 14. The name, too, is found in a form identical, as to the two first syllables, with the Hebrew *Ana*. “It was this pair of deities,” writes Mr. Boscawen, “Anat, Anuniture, or Anatis, and Shamas, the sun-god, that were worshipped by the Samaritans, who were transported from Sepharvaim by Sargon (2 Kings xvii. 32).” He

* *The Hibbert Lectures*, pp. 152, 153. † Pages 153, 154.

also mentions that Anat was regarded as both a god and a goddess.* Still this point cannot be regarded as altogether clear, and further light will have to be awaited. With regard to Adrammelech, there is no doubt whatever; and the uniting of the name Anammelech with this certainly suggests that of his consort Anounit-malkitu.

When we ask whether these were connected in any way with the two Sipars, the reply is full and emphatic. "Sippara," says Professor Sayce, "was pre-eminently the city of the sun-god. It was there that ê-Bábara, 'the house of lustre,' the great temple of the sun-god had been erected in days to which tradition alone went back, and it was around its shrine that Semitic sun-worship in Babylonia was chiefly centred."† Sippara was called *Sippara sã Samas*, Sipar of the sun-god. "By the side of Sipar of Samas . . . arose the twin-city of Sippara of Anounit."‡ When excavating in the mounds of Abou-Habba, the site of the ancient Sippar, Mr. Rassam, as we have already seen, found in a kind of chest made of baked clay, a tablet which illustrates this sun-worship. Speaking of the speedy success which rewarded his labours in excavating in the mounds at Abu-habbu, the site of Sepharvaim, he says: "I was rewarded, after three days' trial, by one of the gangs coming upon the wall of a chamber, on examining which I could see it belonged to the old Babylonian style of building. This success encouraged me to prosecute the research with uninterrupted

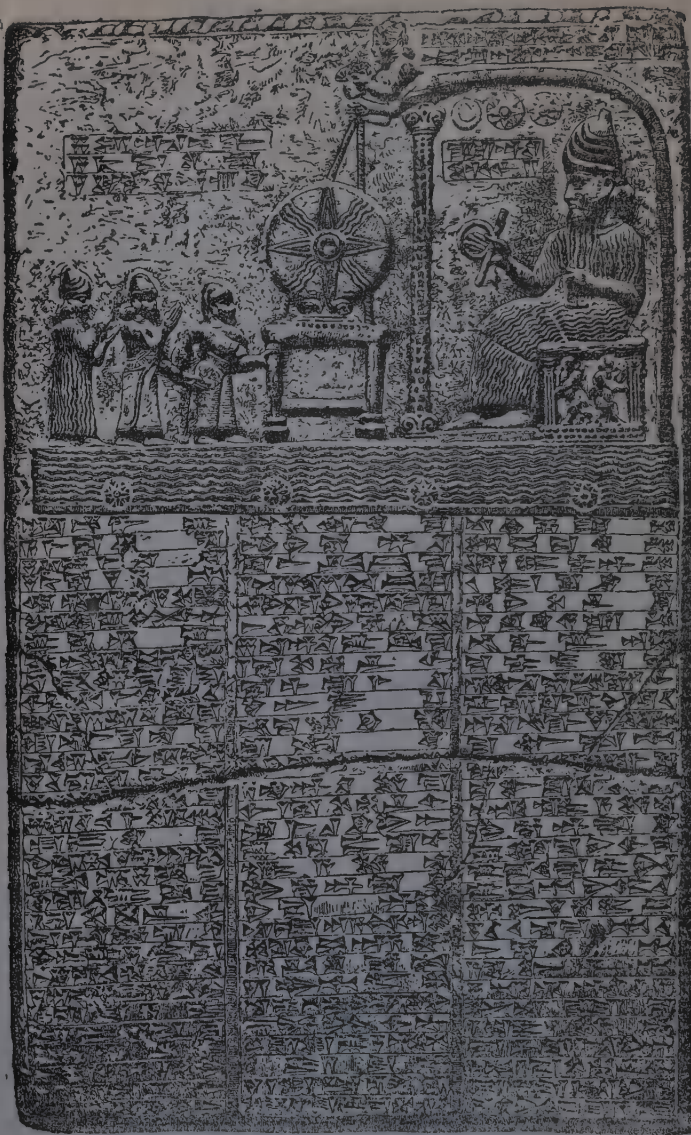
* Transactions of the Victoria Institute, vol. xvii., p. 249.

† *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 168. ‡ Page 182.

perseverance, and before many days were over we came upon other buildings in different parts of the mound. This made me work with redoubled energy, and very soon afterwards we came upon a chamber paved with asphalt, which proved to contain the history of the new city which I had discovered. Heretofore all Assyrian and Babylonian structures were found to be paved generally either with stone or brick; consequently this novel discovery led me to have the asphalt broken into and examined. On doing so, we found, buried in a corner of the chamber, about three feet below the surface, an inscribed earthenware coffer, inside which was deposited a stone tablet covered with an inscription, on the top of which was represented some deity which has since been identified by Assyrian scholars with the sun-god; also two figures above, holding an emblem of the sun before him, and two priests leading a youth, evidently a prince, to present to him. With this tablet I found two perfect terra-cotta inscribed cylinders, covered minutely with inscription, giving also the history of the place." *

Dr. Pinches has translated the inscription which occupies the lower, and larger, part of the front of this tablet, and the whole of the back. It refers to the plundering and the destruction of the sanctuaries by the Sutu, "a wicked enemy." The king of Sepharvaim asked in vain for the restoration of the property. He then commenced the restoration of the temple. He did not live to complete the work, and it was con-

* *Transactions of the Victoria Institute*, xvii., p. 223, 224.



TABLET SHOWING THE ADORATION OF THE SUN GOD AT SIPAR.

tinued by a subsequent king. But it was reserved for a Babylonian king, Nabu-apla-iddin, to completely restore the structure. It was "adorned with the image of the sun-god, and with chased gold and bright crystal. Besides this, the king found a shrine for the sun-god in Bît-kar-zagina, beside the Euphrates, where victims were offered, and honey and wine bestowed."*

The tablet is now in the British Museum. The reader will find a copy of it on the opposite page. The god is in a shrine. The statue is of colossal size. The throne on which the god is seated is without back or side supports, but is carved and ornamented. He has a beard which descends to his girdle, and his head is adorned with a crown composed of four pairs of horns, symbols of power. Upon, or behind, the altar in front of him is a huge solar disc. Three personages, as Mr. Rassam has said, are represented in the act of worship. The first is evidently a priest, who lays hold of the altar with his left hand, and with the right grasps the left hand of a worshipper whom he is presenting before the god. Behind the worshipper is the king Nabu-apla-iddina, the Babylonian monarch who caused this memorial of his restoration of the temple and his worship of the god of Sippar to be made. The tablet contains, besides the history of the restoration, a list of the king's gifts, and also a list of the festivals on which the god was specially honoured. These amounted to six yearly. One wonders whether the youth, figured in the inscription, is a victim whom

* *Ibid*, p. 224.

the priest leads to the god, and behind whom the Babylonian king appears. The priests' grasp, with one hand upon the altar and with the other upon the youth, may indicate that he is intended for the altar.

These festivals were doubtless kept by his votaries in Samaria. The men have long since passed away. The temples and altars of the sun-god and the sun-goddess have long been buried in the dust. The horrid rites by which their favor was sought ceased long centuries ago, slain by the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, whose light in the fulness of the times rose upon the nations. But their memorials, so strangely recovered in these last times, now serve the God whom men had abandoned and forgotten, and these now come forth from their ruined heaps to swell the cry: "Thy word is truth."

CHAPTER XIII.

HEZEKIAH AND SENNACHERIB.

THERE have been great moments and great characters in history which inevitably remind one of similar times and personages; and it is long since historians have delighted their readers by pointing out the parallels, and impressing the lessons, which these have emphasized. The Scripture has also availed itself of those historic materials; but this has been done for a purpose which is in perfect accord with its own

miraculous character. History has frequently availed itself of such parallels for the illumination of the past: the Scripture has used them for the illumination of the future.

The Bible is, above all things, the Book of the Future. From the first it proclaimed the advent of the Christ—the Christ, not of the Cross only, but also of the Throne. Even in that first glimpse, in Gen. iii. 15, we mark, on the one side, the subtle and malignant adversary, and on the other, the wounded Helper and triumphant Deliverer. We have there both the tragedy and the glory which the Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, sets before us. This persistent purpose explains, I believe, the exceeding brightness of that part of Jewish history with which we are now to deal. Who is it that does not, at the mention of the names of Hezekiah and of Sennacherib, bring forth from the chambers of his imagery one of the very brightest of their pictures? From our childhood we have seen, as vividly as if we had looked upon them with our own eyes, the Jewish king in the midst of his trembling people, bathed in tears, clothed in sackcloth, spreading out that letter before the Lord, and the proud conqueror coming down “as a wolf on the fold,” and causing his blasphemies to be uttered before the gates of the holy city. And why is the vail so fully lifted here? Why is this bit of the past endowed with such immortality and made so eternally present? Because it casts light upon the future. That bit of the past, so clear and bright, is a window through which we look out upon the things to come. No reader of Isaiah will have

forgotten "the Assyrian" who figures so largely in his glowing pictures of the future. "The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand: That I will break the Assyrian in My land, and upon My mountains tread him under foot: then shall his yoke depart from off them, and his burden depart from off their shoulders. *This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth:* and this is the hand that is stretched out upon the nations" (Isaiah xiv. 24-26). There comes a moment when Israel will once more tremble within the walls of Jerusalem, and when the blasphemies of the antichrist will be proclaimed before its walls. But to faith this will merely be the commencement of the story. Has not the rest been written from of old? "The Assyrian" comes only to be "broken without hand" and to be trodden under foot; and the culmination of the terror will mark the beginning of the full and enduring deliverance.

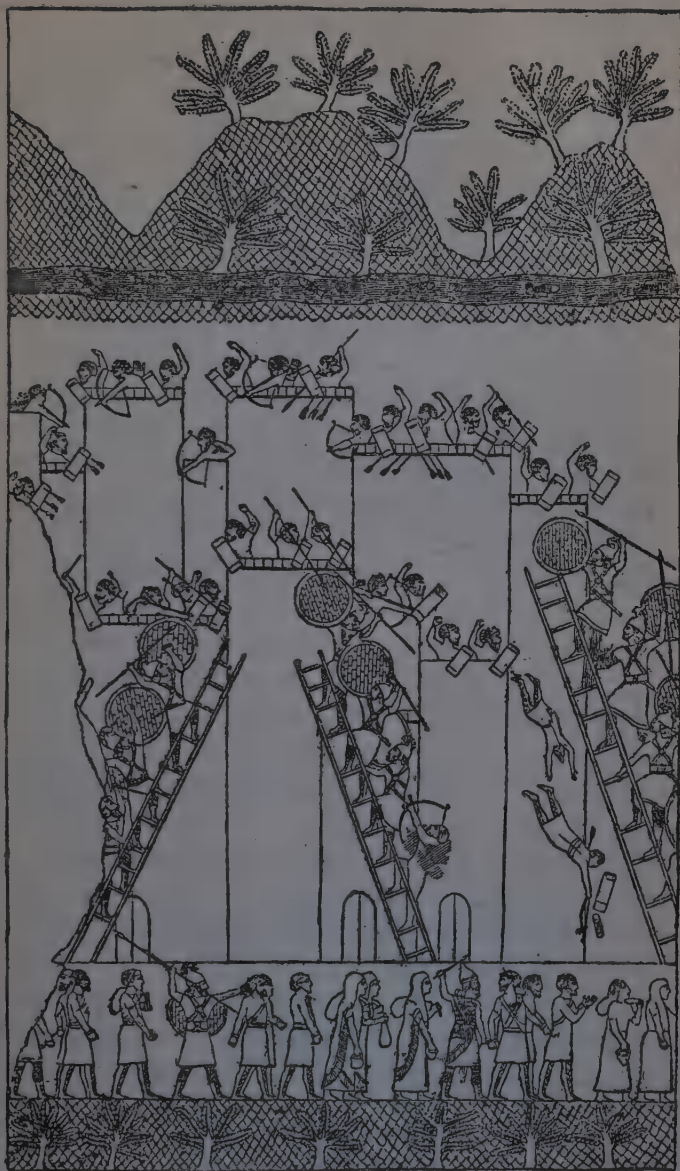
Though it is impossible not to notice this, it does not belong to our present effort to dwell upon it. We have to meet the issue forced upon us by an unbelief which claims that it has made the old beliefs impossible, and which clamours for "the indemnity." Here once more, then, we have a field—and a field specially spacious—on which these claims may be tried. Let it be noted also that that feature of the Bible, which is so obnoxious to the higher criticism—the supernatural—is abundantly present. Hezekiah prays, God answers; and an Assyrian army, which it is in vain for Syria and for Egypt to think of meeting,

is "broken without hand." In a single night it is almost annihilated, though undisturbed by any earthly foe. The awe-stricken remnant pass with swift marches to their own land; but even there vengeance awaits the man who dared to measure himself with God. While worshipping his god he is slaughtered by his own children. Here are miracles, and "a poetic justice" almost equally condemned as non-natural by the critics. In other words, the marks of a late and manipulated tradition are to such eyes not only apparent but glaring. Have we here, then, tradition or fact? In other words, does our supernatural Bible contain veritable history? Or is it legend and fiction?

When M. Botta, the French Consul at Mosul, on the Tigris, commenced his excavations at Nimroud, one of his most earnest sympathisers was Mr. Layard, then connected with the British Embassy at Constantinople. The deep interest taken by Layard in those excavations was manifested by letters to *The Malta Times*, in which their results were described and discussed. The interest of Sir Stratford Canning, our Ambassador to the Porte, was awakened, and he offered to bear the expense if Layard would undertake excavations on his own account. The generous offer was at once accepted. The explorer, whose fame will be long linked with this part of the Bible history, proceeded to Assyria, took up his abode at Mosul, and, to escape the lynx eye of the Turkish Pasha, hurriedly engaged a few workmen, boarded a raft, and giving out that he was going on a hunting

expedition, proceeded to Nimroud, a collection of mounds some miles lower down the river, where Botta had commenced his excavations but had found little. The result was the commencement of the discovery of those huge, sculptured, human-headed bulls and lions, with the appearance of which everyone is now familiar. There were inscribed slabs also, which no one at that time was able to read, but the importance of which was universally admitted. It was felt that the ancient East was coming back into the life of to-day; and, as one has said, that the world in its old age was vividly recalling the long vanished scenes of its youth. Many a heart responded to those words of Layard's: "These winged, human-headed lions were not idle creations, the offspring of mere fancy: their meaning was written upon them. They had awed and instructed races which had lived 3,000 years ago. Through the portals which they guarded, kings, priests, and warriors had borne sacrifices to their altars, long before the wisdom of the East had penetrated to Greece, and had furnished its mythology with symbols long recognised by the Assyrian votaries."* On the slabs, which lined the now roofless and ruined chambers, were the records in sculpture, and apparently also in writing, of ancient conquests. "In the upper compartment of the next slab was the siege of a city, with the battering ram and movable tower, now in the British Museum. The lower part of the two slabs was occupied by one subject, a king receiving prisoners brought before him by his vizir

* *Nineveh and its Remains*, chapter iii.



**ASSAULT OF A CITY BY THE ASSYRIANS.
THE INHABITANTS LED AWAY INTO CAPTIVITY.**

. . . . The prisoners were on the adjoining slab, Above their heads were vases and various objects. amongst which appeared to be shawls, and elephants' tusks, probably representing the spoil carried away from the conquered nation. . . . On the flooring, below the sculptures, were discovered considerable remains of painted plaster still adhering to the sun-dried bricks, which had fallen in masses from the upper part of the wall. The colours, particularly the blues and the reds, were as brilliant and vivid, when the earth was removed from them, as they could have been when first used. On exposure to the air they faded rapidly. The designs were elegant and elaborate."*

The tidings of these discoveries awakened the greatest interest at home, and the interest was deepened by the announcement that Sir Stratford Canning had made over to the British nation all the objects which had been discovered. The enthusiasm was great enough to compel the attention of the ministry of the day, and a sum was voted to the British Museum for the prosecution of the work. But indifference was in this case succeeded only by penuriousness. So wretchedly inadequate was the amount voted that a salary could not be afforded for a draughtsman, and Mr. Layard had to do the best he could with unpractised hands to preserve sculptures and priceless inscriptions found upon slabs which crumbled away almost as soon as they were bared to the light of day. He was also denied the

* Chapter v.

aid of other skilled assistance, and he had to remove with his own hands the earth which covered the face of monuments which would have been ruined by incautious workmen. Fortunately, the explorer had secured the services of Mr. Hormuzd Rassam, to whom we owe so much in the work of after excavation, and who is still among us.

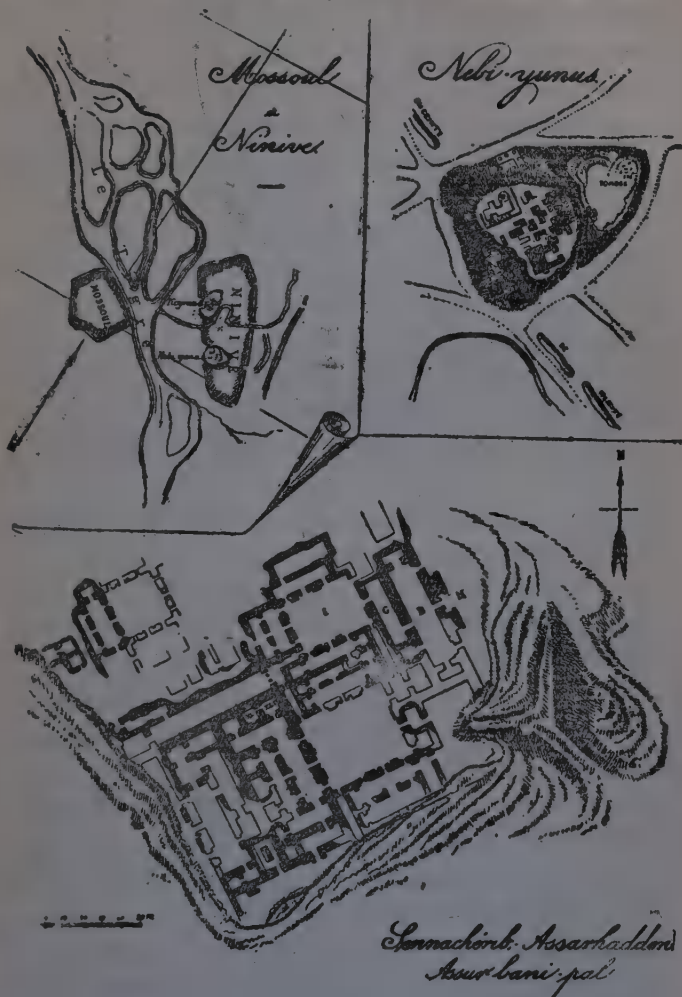
When Layard turned to the mounds of Kouyounyik he had not the faintest notion that it was the connection of his name with the ruins he was to find there that would make him famous. After describing the completion of his excavations at Nimroud, he says: "As a small sum of money still remained at my disposal, I proposed to devote it to an examination of the ruins opposite Mosul, particularly of the great mound of Kouyounyik." One reason of this hopelessness of results was the wholesale destruction of the remains which had been carried on for ages. The mounds had formed the quarries of the neighbourhood. Precious slabs had been excavated, broken up, and built into the houses, and quantities more had been burned to furnish lime for the buildings.

His men had not been long at work, however, before hopelessness was exchanged for the most intense interest and expectation. The excavators made their way into a series of long, narrow chambers. The walls were, or had been, panelled with sculptured slabs. The winged human-headed bulls were much larger than those at Nimroud. The palace had evidently been destroyed by fire, and the slabs were, in many cases, reduced almost to lime. But there were many

also in much better condition. On one the king was sculptured. He stood in a chariot with a bow in his hand. The right hand was raised apparently in token of triumph. "He was accompanied by a charioteer, and by an attendant bearing an umbrella, to which was hung a long curtain, falling behind the back of the king, and screening him entirely from the sun." Layard had found Sennacherib and Nineveh, the great city which Sennacherib had re-built and adorned. "The ruins," says Layard, "were evidently those of a palace of great extent and magnificence. From the size of the slabs and the number of the figures, the walls, when entire and painted, as they no doubt originally were, must have been of considerable beauty, and the dimensions of the chambers must have added greatly to the general effect. . . The position of the ruins proves that at one time this was one of the most important parts of Nineveh; and the magnificence of the remains, that the edifices must have been founded by one of the greatest of the Assyrian monarchs."

Scholars were then grappling with the problems presented by the Assyrian writing, but the work of decipherment had not yet really begun. Layard noticed, however, two facts. It was already known that when two names followed each other in the inscriptions, the first was the name of the son, the second the name of the father, the names running thus: A, the son of B. In comparing the inscriptions which had been found at Khorsabad by Botta with those which he himself had now excavated at Nineveh, he saw that the name of the king at Khorsabad occurred

in the second place in those at Nineveh. In other



PLAN OF THE RUINS OF NINEVEH, AND OF THE PALACES OF SENNACHERIB, OF ESARHADDON, AND OF ASSUR-BANI-PAL.

words, the king who had built the Khorsabad palace was the father of the restorer of Nineveh. Later discoveries proved the correctness of this, for the names were those of Sargon and of Sennacherib. He noted, too, that Sargon's name was not followed by a second. This was also true; for Sargon, being a usurper, could make no boast of royal descent. Another remark of Layard's ought not to be forgotten. There has been, from first to last, marvellous Providential guidance in these discoveries, and Layard was compelled to note this in his own case as well. "Had these palaces," he writes, "been exposed to view some years before, no one would have been ready to take advantage of the circumstance, and they would have been completely destroyed by the inhabitants of the country. Had they been discovered a little later, it is highly probable that there would have been insurmountable objections to their removal. It was consequently just at the right moment that they were disinterred." *

The monuments of Nineveh enable us to look upon what are no doubt exact likenesses of Sennacherib. We have "a bas-relief," writes Vigouroux—"and this is not one of the least of the surprises which the archæological discoveries in Assyria had in store for us—which represents this terrible king whom we have all from our infancy learned from this narrative of sacred history to regard with horror. M. Oppert tells with what emotion he saw at Nineveh, at the very moment when it was discovered, the image of this

* Chapter xiv.

conqueror who had done such injury to his ancestors. What gives this bas-relief a greater value, if that is possible, is that it represents Sennacherib, not in Assyria, but in Palestine, at Lachish. He is seated upon a throne richly ornamented, the back of which is covered with a flowered carpet, surrounded with broad fringes. The feet are imitations of the pineapple. The sides of the seat are upheld by three rows of personages, arranged four by four, who, with uplifted arms, sustain the cross bars. The king is sumptuously clothed with materials ornamented with flowers and fringes similar to those on the carpet on the back of the throne. His lower tunic is fringed with tassels. His upper garment resembles a chasuble. His feet are covered with rich slippers. His hair is adorned with the tiara, from which hang down two long pendants. His hair and his beard are very long, and are carefully curled. He wears cruciform earrings. A magnificent bracelet surrounds each of his half-bared arms. His right hand is lifted and armed with an arrow. In his left he holds the bow, which he leans upon the steps of his throne. Sennacherib has a very pronounced aquiline nose. His countenance has a severe air, and reveals the implacable conqueror and merciless warrior.”*

Hezekiah, a son of Ahaz, one of the very worst kings that ever filled the throne of David, began his reign at twenty-five, and immediately set himself to repair the evil done by his father. He re-opened and repaired the temple. He stirred up the priests and

* *La Bible et les Decouvertes Modernes*, t. iv., pp. 15, 16.



SENNACHERIB SEATED ON HIS THRONE (*from the Monuments*).

Levites to address themselves anew to the discharge of their long-suspended duties. The temple was cleansed, and the people were led back to the long closed courts and to the deserted altar. Ahaz had made Judah tributary to Assyria; but Hezekiah seems to have resolved to omit the customary tribute, and to trust in Him whose prophets and offered signs Ahaz had scorned, but whose promise to be Israel's shield still stood. We shall now see the results of this bold step, and of this weak power's daring, but humble (because God-relying), defiance of the mightiest empire of the time.

CHAPTER XIV.

SENNACHERIB'S INVASION.

IN 2 Kings xviii. 13-16, we read: "Now in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah did Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them. And Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria to Lachish, saying, I have offended; return from me: that which thou puttest on me will I bear. And the king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. And Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the Lord, and in the treasures of the king's house. At that time did Hezekiah cut off (the gold from) the doors of the temple of the Lord, and

(from) the pillars which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria."

It was a time of heavy trial. Had the writer of this Book, been making, and not recording, history—if, instead of being inspired and used by the Spirit of God, he had been working up materials to inculcate his own theory of Jewish history, he must have sadly forgotten the "pragmatism" with which the critics charge him. Instead of arranging the history according to the simple plan of rebellion and punishment, obedience and blessing, here are facts recorded on which our shallow moralisings and the theories of the critics alike go to pieces. For this is a king who is among the very best that Israel has seen for long ages; he has just completed, the Chronicles tell us, one of the greatest and most thorough religious reforms which the world has ever witnessed; and, nevertheless, there follows this time of fearful disaster and suffering. Judah passes through one of the bitterest and darkest hours in all its history. "Sennacherib the king of Assyria came up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them." There was not one fortified city—the capital alone excepted—which was not a scene of terror and of slaughter. And, to end this fearful visitation, Hezekiah has to undo the dearest and most sacred of all his labours. He had to strip the doors and the pillars of the house of the Lord, and to remove the splendid appointments for its service, in order to make up the appointed tribute.

We might point out that this was but the beginning

and not the end of the story, and that there was a mighty triumph in store for faith. We might also argue that Judah had deeply transgressed in the former reign and could not escape punishment. It would also be open to us to remind those who find difficulty here that "the Lord trieth the righteous," and that only through trial could both Judah and Hezekiah be established. But let it be noted that of all this there is not a word nor a hint in the Book before us. Commentaries may be full of it, but there is nothing of it in the text. Could there possibly be a more complete demonstration that the shallow and childish moralising which the critics say is the motive and the end of these Books is *not* their explanation? If that had been their purpose, facts like these would never have been placed on record so baldly and so calmly.

But discovery has intervened in this discussion with startling effect. It has put Sennacherib himself into the witness box. That king has told the story of the invasion, and detailed the various items of the tribute which Hezekiah sent him. His inscriptions are specially numerous, and are in an unusually perfect condition. His name, as inscribed upon his own monuments, corresponds with that in the Scripture letter for letter—*Sin-akhi-erib*. His third campaign, after ascending the throne, was to the land of Hatti, that is to Syria, which included Judæa. He says:—

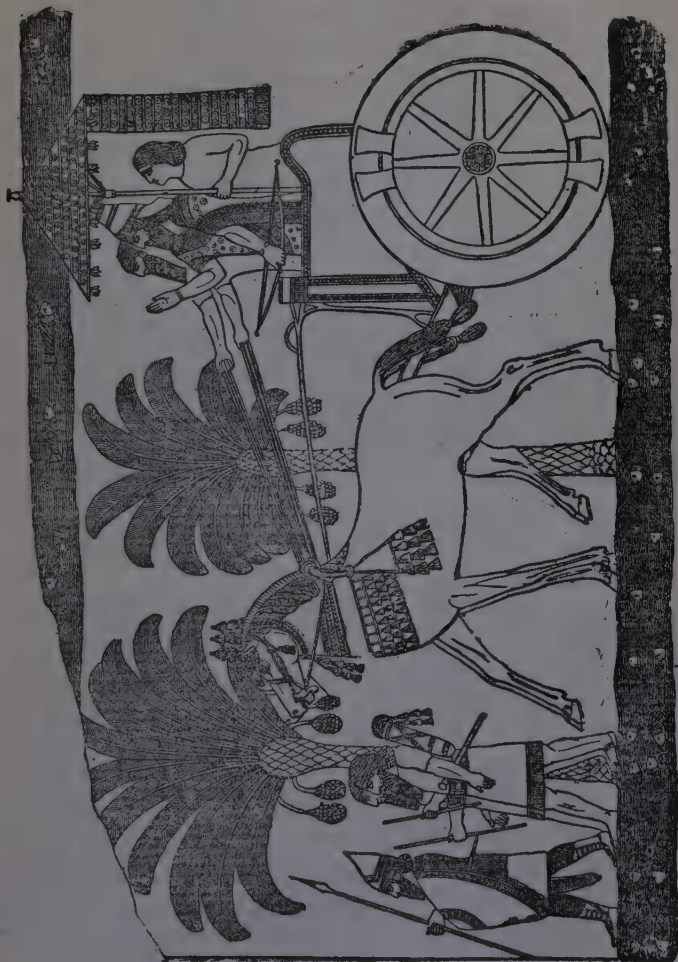
"In my third expedition I went to the land of Hatti. Lulî king of the city of Sidunnu (Sidon), fear of the glory of my dominion,

struck him, and he fled from the midst of Tyre to Yatnana (Cyprus), which is in the middle of the sea, and I subjugated his country. Great Sidunnu, little Sidunnu, Bît-zitte, Sareptu (Zarephath or Sarepta), Mahal-liba, Usu (Osah), Akzibi (Achzib), Akku (Accho), strong cities, fortresses where were food and drink, his strongholds, the terror of the weapons of Assur my lord struck them, and they submitted to my feet. Tu-ba'alu (Ethobaal) on the throne of dominion over them I set, and the tax and tribute of my overlordship yearly without fail I imposed upon him."

So begins the long inscription. The last days of the redoubtable Sargon had been marked by inactivity and civil war. The yoke had accordingly been thrown off by the distant conquests, and Hezekiah had, in withholding his tribute, only taken part in a widespread movement. This entire district had to be re-conquered, and Sennacherib commences with the sea-coast. Let it be noted that Tyre exercises at this time lordship over a wide district. Sennacherib proceeds:—

"As for Minhimmu (Menahem) of the city of the Samsumurunâa; Tu-ba'alu of the city of the Sidunâa (Sidonians); Abdi-li'iti of the city of the Arudâa (Arvadites); Urumilki of the city of the Gublâa (Gebalites); Mitinti of the city of the Asdudâa (Ashdodites); Budu-ilu of the land of the Bit-Ammanâa (Beth-Ammonites); Kammusu-nudbi (Chemosh-nadab)

of the land of the Ma'abâa (Moabites); Aa-



THE ASSYRIAN KING RETURNING IN TRIUMPH.

rammu (Joram) of the land of the Udumanâa (Edomites); kings of the land of Amoria

(the Amorites) all of them extensive coasts, brought their valuable presents as gifts to my presence and kissed my feet."

A word may here be interposed as to some of these names. Who is Menahem of the city of the Samsummaruna? Geo. Smith translated "Menahem of Samaria." Later Assyriologists leave the Assyrian name untranslated. We shall find that the inscription as we proceed is not only imperfect, but that it also fails to square with honesty. There is an evident attempt to conceal some damaging blow, and to dazzle the reader of Sennacherib's annals with an imposing array of conquests. Is he here including a king long dead and a conquest previously made by his father, Sargon? The name is spelled somewhat differently from that of Samaria in Sargon's inscription; and, though it would be hard to say what other place it refers to, we must give Sennacherib the benefit of the doubt. Let us turn to his inscription:—

"And Sidqâ (Zedekiah) king of the city of Isqalluna (Askelon) who was not submissive to my yoke, the gods of his father's house, himself, his wife, his sons, his daughters, his brothers, (and) the seed of his father's house I removed and brought to Assur. Sarru-ludari son of Rukibtu, their former king, I placed over the people of the land of Isqalluna, and the payment of tribute as the price of my overlordship I set for him, and he bore my yoke. In the course of my campaign the city Bit-Daganna (Beth-Dagon), Yappu (Joppa),

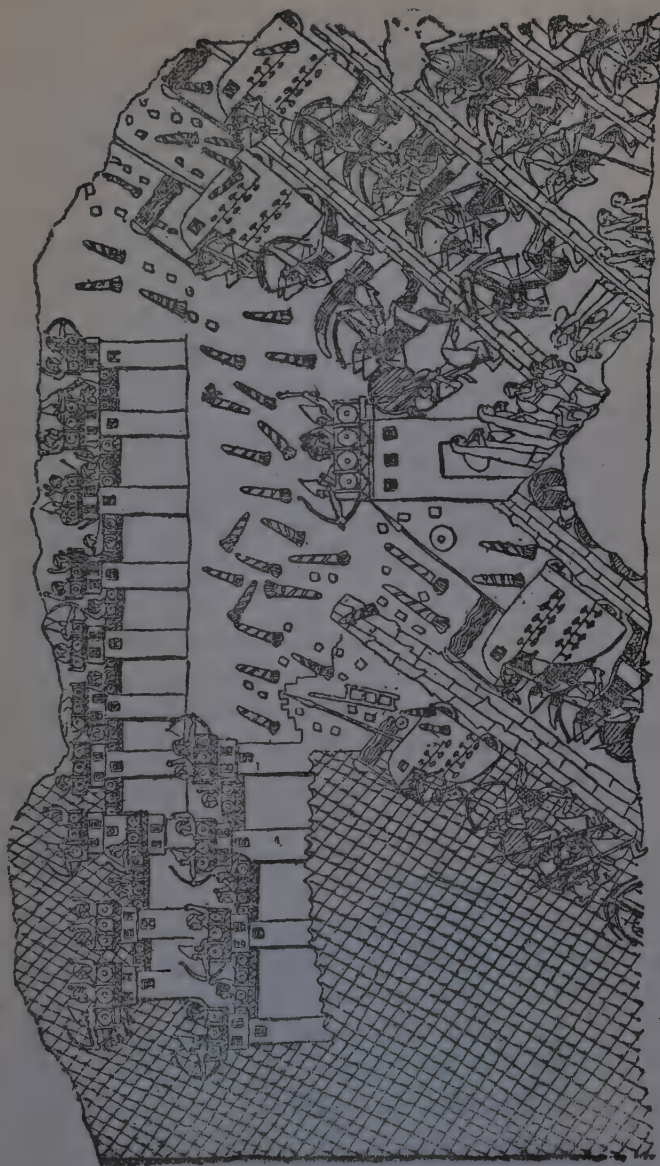
Banâa-barqa (Bene-berak), Azuru (Azor), cities of Sidqâ, which were afterwards not submissive to my yoke, I besieged, captured (and) carried off their spoil."

Plainly we have here the narrative of an extensive and resolutely conducted campaign. Sennacherib sweeps along the sea coast, overthrowing, one after another, the ancient strongholds of the Philistines, which seem all to be under the rule of Sidqâ, that is, of Zedekiah, of Askelon. We now come to the first mention of the name of Hezekiah.

"The prefects, the princes, and the people of the city Amqarruna (Ekron), who had thrown Padi their king, who was faithful to the agreement and oath of the land of Assur, into fetters of iron, and given him to Haziqiau (Hezekiah) of the land of the Yaudâa (Jews)—hostilely in secret they acted (and) they feared in their hearts. The kings of the land of Musru (Egypt), (and) the soldiers of the bow, the chariots and the horses of the king of the land of Meluhha, gathered to themselves a numberless force, and came to their help. Over against me, in sight of Altaqû (Eltekah), their line of battle was set in array; they called for their weapons. In the service of Assur my lord I fought with them and accomplished their defeat. The charioteers and the sons of the king of the Musurâa (Egyptians), with the charioteers of the sons of the king of the land of Meluhha, my hands captured alive in the

midst of the battle. As for the city of Altaqû (Eltekah) (and) the city of Tamnâ (Timnah), I besieged, captured, (and) carried off their spoil.

“I approached to the city of Amqarruna (Ekron), and the prefects and princes who had caused the wrong to be I killed, and on stakes around the city I hung their corpses. The sons of the city doing the crime and misdeed I counted as spoil. The rest of them, who did not commit sin and wickedness, whose evil deed was not, I commanded their release. I caused Padi, their king, to come forth from the midst of Ursalimmu (Jerusalem), and to sit on the throne of dominion over them, and the tribute of my overlordship I imposed upon him. And as for Hazaqiau (Hezekiah) of the land of the Yaudâa (Jews) who had not submitted to my yoke, forty-six of his strong cities, fortresses and small towns which were around them, which were innumerable, with overthrowing by battering rams, and advance of towers, infantry attack, breaching, cutting, and earthworks I besieged (and) captured: 200,150 people, small and great, male and female, horses, mules, asses, camels, oxen, and sheep, which were without number, from their midst I caused to come forth and reckoned as spoil. As for him, like a cage-bird I shut him up within Ursalimmu, the city of his dominion. Redoubts I threw up around him, and I cut off the exit from the great gate of his city—it



SIEGE OF THE CITY OF LACHISE. FLAMING TORCHES ARE THROWN BY THE BESIEGERS UPON THE BATTERING RAMS, ETC.

(From the Monuments.)

was (completely) covered. His cities which I had spoiled, I detached from the midst of his country, and gave them to Metintu, king of Ashdudu (Ashdod), Padi, king of Amqarruna (Ekron), and Silli-bêl king of the city Hazitu (Gaza), and (thus) reduced his land. Over the former gift I added a payment as the due of my overlordship, and imposed it upon him. As for him Hazaqiau (Hezekiah) fear of the magnificence of my lordship struck him, and the *urbu* and his chosen soldiers which he had brought in for the defence of Ursalimmu, the city of his kingdom, and had as guards (?), with thirty talents of gold, 800 talents of silver, precious (stones), *guhli*, *dag-gasi*, great carbuncles (?), couches of ivory, state thrones of ivory, elephant-skin, elephant-tooth (ivory), ebony (?), urkarinnu-wood, all sorts of things, and his daughters, the women of his palace, male singers (and) female singers, he (or I) caused to be brought after me to the midst of Ninua (Nineveh), the city of my dominion, and he sent his messenger to present the gift and pay homage."*

There is nothing said in Scripture of any *siege* of Jerusalem in the time of Hezekiah. But when the two records are weighed, there is seen to be the most perfect agreement. It will be observed that though Sennacherib says that he besieged Jerusalem and shut up Hezekiah in it as a cage-bird (an old simile with

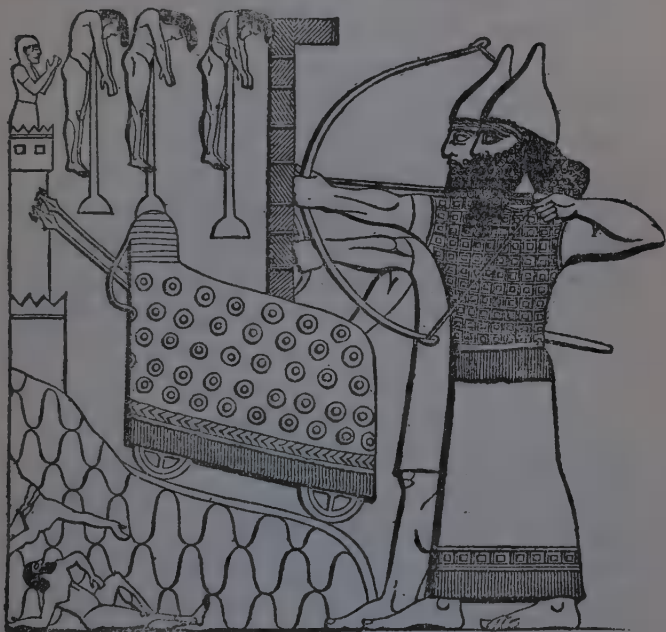
* Dr. Pinches, *The Old Testament*, pp. 373-376.

Assyrian kings), he says nothing about the *capturing* of the city, or of entering into it. On the other hand, the Scripture, though it is silent as to a regular siege, says that "the king of Assyria sent Tartan and Rabsaris and Rab-shakeh from Lachish to king Hezekiah *with a great host against Jerusalem*" (2 Kings xviii. 17). This great host did not come, we may rest assured, merely to look on, or only to form an escort for the great Assyrian officials. Besides, too, the passage says distinctly that the "great host" was "sent against Jerusalem." In other words, they were commanded to besiege it. That siege was interrupted in some way; but, even according to the Scripture account, it was begun. Sennacherib mentions the tribute as if it was the result of this operation; but here, as is plain from other indications, he is seeking to cover his disasters from the eyes of his contemporaries and of posterity. Why, however, did he, after receiving and accepting tribute, renew hostilities and attack Jerusalem? This has been a difficulty of long standing, and it is one which, so far as I am aware, has received no satisfactory solution. One explanation has been insisted upon, namely, that a considerable interval must have occurred between Hezekiah's paying the tribute and the march of the Assyrian forces to Jerusalem. "Sennacherib," argues one, "*cannot*, directly after his demands had all been granted, and the tribute paid him, have turned on Hezekiah with the insulting message in the text. He must have received fresh provocation; and it is not difficult to see what the provocation was. Content

with his successes, Sennacherib had returned to Nineveh with his spoil and his numerous captives. Hezekiah, left to himself, repented of his submission. Perhaps he received overtures from the Ethiopian monarch, who, from distant Meroë, bore sway not only over Ethiopia, but over Egypt. (So Stanley conjectures.) . . . It was under these circumstances that Sennacherib appears to have made his second expedition into Palestine very soon after his first."

This writer must have forgotten that the siege of Jerusalem is described by Sennacherib as occurring in his first expedition into Palestine. The difficulty therefore remains, and the question which it raises is pressed upon us with still greater urgency. What, then, turned Sennacherib's satisfaction into the stern resolve to blot out the kingdom of Judah as his father Sargon had blotted out that of the ten tribes? The change in Sennacherib's attitude is not formally explained in the Bible statement; and yet the Bible has all along contained the explanation. Chronicles (xxxii. 5) gives us special information which puts in our hands the key to this enigma. We read there that he "built up all the wall that was broken, and raised it up to the towers, and another wall without, and repaired Millo in the city of David." Hezekiah strengthened the defences of Jerusalem. This was apparently done just after the tribute was paid. It may have been that a part of the defences which had been planned but not completed before the tribute was paid, was now carried out as soon as peace was made. But it was an act that looked like

preparation for a fresh rebellion; and *Sennacherib himself tells us that this was the cause of his assault upon Jerusalem*. In another inscription, which also details the incidents of this third campaign, he says: "He himself, like a bird in a cage, inside Jerusalem his



SIEGE OF A CITY BY THE ASSYRIANS: CAPTIVES IMPALED BEFORE THE WALLS (*from the Monuments*).

royal city I shut him up: siege towers against him I constructed, FOR HE HAD GIVEN COMMAND TO RENEW THE BULWARKS OF THE GREAT GATE OF HIS CITY.”* It would have been absurd to have mentioned an act of that kind as the cause of an Assyrian campaign,

* *Records of the Past* (Second Edition), vol. i., pp. 40, 41.

or an excuse for an invasion. But it was regarded as an ample justification for the renewal of hostilities. Sennacherib was advancing toward Egypt, and judged that he must secure himself against even the possibility of an attack from the rear. This strengthening of the gate was accordingly seized upon as an act of rebellion. The Assyrian spies had carried the tidings to Lachish, and this was Sennacherib's answer. He would nip the rebellion in the bud, and secure lasting peace by rooting out the race.

In pointing out the other confirmations, I shall follow the Bible narrative. They meet us in clusters all along the way. Verse 13, as we have already marked, tells us that "Sennacherib, king of Assyria, came up against all the fenced cities of Judah and took them." Here there is no hiding of disaster. All the fortified cities were besieged and taken. In perfect accord with this, Sennacherib tells us their number, and informs us besides, that the capture of each fenced city carried with it the fall of the smaller towns which it protected. "Forty-six," he says, "of his strong cities, fortresses and small towns which were around them, which were innumerable, with overthrowing by battering-rams . . . I besieged and captured." He adds that he carried away over two hundred thousand people small and great, and horses, asses, mules, camels, and flocks and herds "without number." This enables us to appreciate the importance of Judah even in those times. In a previous campaign, Sennacherib had subdued Babylonia, which had revolted on the death of Sargon.

There in that rich and highly populous territory there were seventy-nine strong towns subdued. That is considerably less than double the forty-six of Judah, and the number shows us the importance of the dominion of Hezekiah. Travellers who see the land as it now is, desolate and wasted, not unnaturally imagine that it could never have maintained a strong people; and the numbers of Uzziah's captains and army, for instance, as recorded in 2 Chronicles xxvi. 12, 13, have been accordingly supposed to be grossly exaggerated. But a country with an almost impregnable capital, with forty-six other fortified cities, which Sennacherib himself describes as "strong," and with dependent towns and villages, "which were innumerable," was one great enough to command the forces which Uzziah, the great Jewish king, had disciplined.

Hezekiah, beholding with a grief which we can well imagine the ravages of the Assyrian hosts, submits at once, and asks Sennacherib to name the indemnity he is to be asked to pay. Sennacherib swells out the list with an array of articles and of persons which may have been rendered by Hezekiah; but, if they were, they were regarded as insignificant in comparison with the large money payment amounting in all to about £450,000. That appears in both accounts, and so far the agreement is again gratifying. But there is one discordant note that has sadly marred the harmony. The Scripture says that "the king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold"

(verse 14). Sennacherib himself says that he received indeed the thirty talents of gold, but he sets down the silver paid him at 800, and not 300, talents! Here the difference is startling. The Assyrian king claims to have received nearly three times as much silver as the Scripture says was sent to him. This was long a trouble. No manner of arithmetic appeared to be able to harmonise the two statements. It seemed impossible that both could be correct; and the only course evidently left to us was to cast doubt upon one or the other. When we turned to learned commentaries, we met statements such as this: "When Sennacherib says that he received 800 talents of silver, perhaps he exaggerates; perhaps he counts all the silver which he obtained from Judæa in the whole of his expedition. Or the regular tribute may have been fixed at 300 talents, and the ransom of the city at 500 more." Another suggestion was, that it was silver and not gold that Hezekiah cut from the doors and pillars of the Temple; and that, owing to its sacredness, this portion of the tribute was not weighed by Hezekiah, but was weighed without scruple by Sennacherib, and found to amount to 500 talents more. But all these suggestions are now set aside by the discovery that both statements are correct; and that the harmony between the Bible and Sennacherib's inscriptions, is, as regards this matter, absolutely perfect. Mr. Basil T. A. Evetts, formerly of the Assyrian Department of the British Museum, says: "The amount of the tribute is identical in the two accounts; for, though the Hebrew narrative

mentions 300 talents of silver, and the Assyrian 800, this results from the difference of the talent of silver in the two countries. The Palestinian talent of silver was exactly eight-thirds of the Babylonian; the talent of gold, on the other hand, was the same in both countries."* In this way three Hebrew silver talents made eight Assyrian silver talents; 30 made 80; and Hezekiah's 300 made Sennacherib's 800 exactly.

We are now told of the rapid advance of the Assyrian host from Lachish (verse 17). It is also said that Sennacherib himself sent it from Lachish. The Assyrian king was therefore besieging, or had already besieged and captured, that city. Lachish lay about ten miles to the south-west of Jerusalem, and was situated upon what must necessarily have been Sennacherib's road to Egypt. This siege is distinctly and repeatedly referred to in the Bible. It is to Lachish that Hezekiah sends his tribute (verse 14); and we are told in 2 Chronicles that Sennacherib warred against Lachish. But the Assyrian king himself makes no mention of this siege; and one might have urged that, if he had fought against and conquered so important a place, it was most improbable that it would have been passed over in silence in inscriptions recording—and recording, too, with considerable fulness and minuteness of detail—this very campaign. Fox Talbot has answered this long ago. "This omission," he writes, "is merely owing to the brevity of the Assyrian narrative; for there are some sculptured slabs in the British Museum repre-

* *New Light on the Bible*, p. 347.

senting the siege of a large city, of which Layard gives an animated account, *Nineveh and Babylon*, page 149: '*The city was defended by double walls, with battlements and towers, and by fortified outworks.*' To capture this stronghold, Sennacherib brought up his whole army, and '*raised against the fortifications as many as ten banks or mounts compactly built of stones, bricks, earth, and branches of trees.*'

"These seem to be the 'siege towers' which the Annals speak of, iii. 21.

"*'The besieged defended themselves with great determination.'* No doubt this gallant defence contributed to save Jerusalem by delaying Sennacherib, and exhausting a portion of his strength. The defenders of the city '*thronged the battlements and towers, showering arrows, javelins, stones, and blazing torches upon the assailants,*' while the Assyrians below '*poured water with large ladles upon the flaming brands which threatened to destroy the engines.*' This is very important, as showing that the Orientals employed fire in their battles. . . . (See page 143).

"Another bas-relief represents the king seated on a magnificent chair of state, figured in Mr. Layard's book, page 150, and '*from a gateway issued a procession of captives, reaching to the presence of the king, who, gorgeously arrayed, received them seated on his throne. Amongst the spoil were furniture, arms, shields, chariots, vases of metal, &c.*'

"Above the head of the king is seen the following most important inscription :

"*'Sennacherib King of Nations, King of Assyria,*

sitting on his throne, causes the spoils of the city of LACHISH to pass before him.'

"Thus we have a full corroboration of this important event in accordance with the narrative in the books of Kings and Chronicles."*

I give a representation from the monument to which Layard refers. It shows Sennacherib seated on his throne, and receiving the prisoners. The inscription describing the scene is placed above the heads of those in front of the procession, and before Sennacherib. It is here reproduced. A description of the throne and of Sennacherib will be found on pages 132-134.



SENNACHERIB RECEIVING CAPTIVES AT LACHISH.

In the inscription here reproduced, the name of Sennacherib will be found at the commencement of the first line, and that of Lachish at the end of the third.

1. 
Sin- zhi- erba sar kissati sar (mātu) Assuri

2. 
ina kussi ni- mi- di u- sib- ma

3. 
sal- la- -at (maḥazu) La- hi- su

4. 
ma- ḥa- ar su e- ti- iq.

In Sennacherib's case we have a large number of inscriptions that are in an unusually perfect condition, and yet, for some reason or other, no notice of the taking of Lachish is to be found among them. This could not have been because the capture was regarded as a trifling matter. The sculpture described by Layard (and of which a sketch is here given) shows that, on the contrary, it was looked upon as a matter of the first importance. Was this city the scene of the judgment which fell upon the Assyrian army? If it was, we could understand why no reference is made to it in the King's records. But, whatever the reason for the silence may have been, the notice translated by Mr. Fox Talbot is amply sufficient. It shows that in the siege of this city Sennacherib's resources were

taxed to the utmost, and that the Scripture has conveyed to us a fuller knowledge of this incident in the king's third campaign than is supplied even by his own carefully prepared annals.

CHAPTER XV.

THE THREATENED SIEGE OF JERUSALEM AND ASSYRIAN COURT TITLES.

IT would appear that the siege to which Sennacherib says he subjected Jerusalem is to be numbered among the projects which that conqueror began but did not finish. The more carefully his accounts of the Jewish campaign are weighed, the clearer does it become that, strictly speaking, no siege operations were ever begun. In the inscription upon a bull statue at Nineveh—one of the guardian deities of his palace—Sennacherib says of Hezekiah, as we have already seen: "Himself I made like a caged bird in the midst of Jerusalem, the city of his royalty: garrison towers over him I raised: his cities which I had plundered, from the midst of his country I separated, and to the kings of Ashdod, Askelon, Ekron, and Gaza, I made them over, and diminished his land."

There can be no doubt that this subjection of the cities of Judah to the lords of the Philistines was arranged in order to accentuate Hezekiah's humiliation. These had been the old enemies of the land,

and occasionally its masters; and Sennacherib had doubtless learned that fact among many others. But there is no account here of siege operations against Jerusalem. All that he says was done was to erect a line of fortresses, which shut off Jerusalem from supplies; and, as he says, confined Hezekiah to his capital like a bird to its cage. The second account merely repeats these very words. He says there: "He himself like a bird in a cage inside Jerusalem his royal city I shut him up: siege-towers against him I constructed." These representations agree entirely with the position of affairs as indicated in the Scripture. Hezekiah, his court, and his army are plainly shut up in Jerusalem. There is apparently neither coming in nor going out. The Jewish king has no army in the field, for the Assyrians pass through the mountains and come up to the very walls of Jerusalem without a battle or a skirmish. The forces were plainly divided among the fortresses at the beginning of the struggle, and the open country was abandoned to the foe.

That is the very picture presented in Sennacherib's inscriptions. Then the agreement is perfect also as to the intended siege itself. That these "garrison-towers" were the preliminaries of the usual terrific Assyrian siege-operations is evident; and the Scripture intimation that there was a purpose to besiege Jerusalem is equally plain. "Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent unto Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Whereas thou hast prayed to Me against Sennacherib king of Assyria: this is the word which the Lord hath spoken concerning him; The virgin, the

daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee. . . . Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the Lord. For I will defend this city to save it for Mine own sake, and for My servant David's sake" (Isa. xxxvii. 21, 22, 33-35). Here, too, it is intimated that Sennacherib's plan included both siege and capture. But, says the Scripture, Jerusalem had laughed him to scorn. Sennacherib should win no triumph there, and the simplest siege operations should not even be begun—"He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it."

The Scripture tells us, however, that the city was summoned. An enormous force swept eastward from Lachish; and, headed by the great officials of the Assyrian empire, encamped before Jerusalem. The Assyrian monuments enable us, as it were, to see the sight on which the eyes of the terrified inhabitants of Jerusalem rested. "From the sculptures which in our day have come to be an object of study," says Mr. Hosmer, "we may behold in detail the battle order. The host is in array, for scouts in the van bring tidings of the approach of a hostile army from the southward. The light-armed troops are slingers and archers. They are dressed in short embroidered

tunics, with their hair surrounded by bands. Like the Saxon bowmen, the archers draw their arrows to the ear. Their weapons are handsomely decorated. The heavy infantry carry spears and shields; on their heads they wear helmets of burnished brass; cross-belts support small arms at the side, and shining discs of metal cover their breasts. They stand in regular ranks, file behind file. To-morrow," should the hosts of Judah make "its onset, the first rank kneeling, the second stooping, will form with their spears a bristling hedge; and from behind, the bowmen will discharge their arrows. In a similar way, twenty-five centuries hence, the brigades of Napoleon, at the battle of Mt. Tabor, not far distant, will receive the charge of the Mamelukes. But the strength of the host is in the swarming cavalry and chariots. The horses are spirited steeds from Arabia and Armenia. The riders sit upon decorated saddles, clad in armour, with helmets and lances. The chariot bands are the chivalry and flower of Asshur. The coursers are caparisoned with purple silk and embroidered cloth; from their heads hang plumes and heavy tassels. As they hurry to and fro, flashing behind them with gold and jasper, with ivory and enamel, roll the formidable vehicles. The warriors within, the veterans of many wars, are clad from head to foot in steel; embossed upon their shields are heads of lions; lofty standards of precious stuffs, embroidered, hang over their plumed helmets, and all along the line hover pennons of scarlet. In the rear are the rams and other warlike engines, the ladders for escalading, the steel tools

for the mines, already battered and blunt with hard service before the fenced cities of Judah. In tents of costly and gaudy stuffs the concubines and eunuchs of the Great King and the Ninevite nobles outnumber even the soldiers. Everywhere, from fertile Jericho to the sea-coast of old Philistia, range the foragers, and, innumerable as a locust swarm, the beasts collected for burden and provision consume the pastures. Here and there some great officer—the chief cup-bearer, or the insolent Rabshakeh, or perhaps even Sennacherib himself—goes by in his canopied chariot, accompanied by stately bodyguards.”*

Such was the scene on which the Jews gazed with pallid cheek and sinking heart. On the surrounding hills, and in the valleys—wherever the eye rested, there were the myriads of a hitherto invincible foe. Would God intervene and save Jerusalem? Before we notice the titles of the Assyrian officials, let me point out how thoroughly the Scripture and the monuments harmonise. Sennacherib’s mention of the carrying away of over 200,000 captives finds no corresponding record in the Bible; but it is, nevertheless, plainly intimated that something of the kind has happened. God’s message through Isaiah to Hezekiah ran thus: “And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward” (Isaiah xxxvii. 31). From these words it is plain that so heavy a blow has fallen upon the country that the fear is entertained that the nation is crushed, and cannot recover. Yes, says the

* *The Story of the Nations: The Jews*, pp. 49-52.

Scripture, it shall recover. A "remnant" has escaped; and that remnant will be the seed of a new population which will once again build and inhabit the now ruined cities. Sennacherib's jubilant records, and this Divine assurance, have before them the same scene. The Assyrian sees the captives led away from the ruined towns. The Scriptures beholds the fugitives that have escaped, and the wretched poor that have been left in the land by the conqueror. The former gloats over the blow inflicted; the latter revives the crushed spirit of the people. The consolation, however, implies the very state of things which the triumph celebrates.

Three officials are named who are in command of the "great host" which now surrounds Jerusalem, or who are sent as special representatives of Sennacherib. "And the king of Assyria sent Tartan and Rabsaris and Rabshakeh from Lachish to king Hezekiah with a great host against Jerusalem" (2 Kings xviii. 17). Tartan is the Assyrian *Turtanu*, the title of the Commander-in-chief of the Assyrian forces. To him, no doubt, the chief command of this "great host," and the conduct of the siege operations, are entrusted. But who are the Rabsaris and the Rabshakeh? Jewish commentators had given an account of these names which was accepted even by Assyriologists. Treating the names as Hebrew words, Rabsaris was made to mean "the chief of the Eunuchs," and Rabshakeh "the chief cup-bearer." This is the kind of thing which we should have had in abundance had we possessed in the Old Testament history "the late traditions" which Professors Driver.

and G. A. Smith, in common with the rest of the critical host, assure us that it is. These explanations are now swept to the winds; but, while Jewish scholarship is confounded, the Scripture is magnified. It may be well to note, as an instance of how little reliance is sometimes to be placed upon supposed scholarship, that the accepted explanation was very bad Hebrew after all. *Shakeh*, as a Hebrew word, could only have meant "a thing to be drunk," and not by any means "a giver of drink," or "a cup-bearer."* But *Rab-shakeh* is now discovered not to be a Semitic word at all; and the attempt, therefore, to give it a meaning by treating it as Hebrew was bound to result in a dismal blunder. The title was an ancient one, and is now known to be an old Sumerian word. It is found upon the monuments, which indicate that its translation into Assyrian is *Rab-sa-rish*, "Chief of the Captains." It is now known to be the title of a great official of the Assyrian court; and, strange to say, it occurs in an inscription of Tiglath-pileser II. as the title of a trusted statesman whom that monarch sends on an exactly similar mission to the city of Tyre. He says: "My officer, the Rabsak, I despatched to Tyre."† We have, consequently, to see in him "the political officer" who accompanies the army as the king's spokesman and Commissioner. The reader will note that, *quite in accordance with this*, it is the Rabshakeh alone of all these officials who makes the demand for the surrender of Jerusalem, and who replies at once to

* Halévy. *Revue des Etudes Juives*, vol. xx., pp. 9, 10. † Schrader, vol. ii., p. 4.

Eliakim and his fellows with all the assurance of authority. As Tiglath-pileser sent his "Rabsak" to Tyre, so Sennacherib has sent his Rabshakeh to Jerusalem.

On the title "Rabsaris" hangs the story of another error, not now of venturesome Hebraists, but of an equally daring and equally unfortunate Assyriologist. Dr. Hugo Winckler, who has quite recently published an edition of Schrader, almost every page of which bristles with antagonism to the Bible, has shown us that the will to strike is not always accompanied with the power. We have just seen that the old Sumerian word "Rabshak," when translated into Assyrian, stands as *Rab-sa-rish*, or *Rab-sa-ris*. This could not escape the lynx eye of Dr. Winckler. Why, says he, there stands the next title, the Rabsaris of the Bible! Plainly, therefore, we have here the origin of this third title, and we have (from the critical view-point) a brilliant light cast upon the way in which the Bible has been built up. After admitting that it has long been verified that the title Rabshakeh corresponds to the Assyrian *Rab-saq*, he continues, in his *Researches into ancient Oriental History*: "On the other hand, no one has hitherto succeeded in finding *Rabsaris* in the inscriptions. . . . This word is wholly due to the sapience of a scholar acquainted with the Assyrian, who," in short, "wrote on the margin of his manuscript this Assyrian translation (*Rabsaris*) of the old word Rabshakeh." A Hebrew scribe, who afterwards copied that manuscript, put "Rabsaris" into the text; and so what were originally only two titles,

became three! The Jewish Assyriologist, Halévey, has (in the article just quoted) ground this supposed discovery to powder. Dr. Winckler was not aware that the blunder was from first to last his own. He was found to be wanting in an adequate knowledge of his own special science. The word *Rabsaris*, which he said was not on the monuments, had then been proved to have been on them all the time. It was written in signs, like other official titles, which Assyriologists had been unable to read, and the proper pronunciation of which was consequently unknown. But, fortunately, on a brick now in the British Museum, an Aramæan translation of one of these inscriptions was discovered. This had been published when Dr. Winckler brought his accusation of error against the Bible, but the learned Assyriologist had not then found time to read the account. The title occurred in the date of a sale of grain. The note of the date runs thus: "In the eponymy of the *Rabsaris*, Nabusar-usar." * This date was the last year of Sennacherib's reign, and it is probable that we have here the name of the very official who that day stood before the walls of Jerusalem at the side of the Rabshakeh. Dr. Pinches has since discovered that *Rab-saris* is the Assyrian title *Rab-sa-resu*, or "Chief of the heads."

"The accuracy with which these titles," writes Professor Sayce, "have been reproduced in the Hebrew text suggests of itself that the document from which they are quoted was contemporaneous with Sennacherib's campaign. Equally suggestive

* *Revue des Etudes Juives*, vol. xx., p. 9.

are the words addressed to Rab-shakeh by the servants of Hezekiah: 'Speak, I pray thee, to thy servants in the Aramæan language, for we understand it: and talk not with us in the Jews' language.'* The fall of Samaria had caused the language of Israel to become that of the Jewish kingdom alone; while the contract-tablets found at Nineveh have thrown a flood of light on the first part of the request. They have made it clear that Aramaic was, at the time, the commercial language of the civilised East, the medium of intercourse among the educated classes of the Assyrian empire. It was a language which everyone was expected to know who was concerned with trade or diplomacy; and accordingly Eliakim and Shebna not only understood it themselves, but expected the Rab-shakeh to understand it also. Even the words with which the Rab-shakeh opens his address are indicative of the Assyrian epoch. 'The great king, the king of Assyria,' is the stereotyped expression with which the Assyrian monarchs describe themselves."†

Here the stamp of the time is impressed distinctly and deeply, not only upon the history, but also upon the slight verbal references of the Bible. While grateful to Professor Sayce for the candid testimony which I have just quoted, I take the liberty to doubt whether his supposition that the writer of 2 Kings consulted an ancient document carries us far enough. An ancient document might have supplied him with ■ correct statement of the facts; but could it possibly

*2 Kings xviii. 26.

† *The Higher Criticism versus the Monuments*, pp. 441, 442.

have so penetrated his mind and so mastered his pen as to have changed his writing into what is practically a document of that ancient time? Historians constantly avail themselves of ancient records; but they convey the information which they derive from these in the phrases of the day to which they and their readers belong. They are not careful, for example, to give such a demand as the Rab-shakeh's in the very form of words in which it was originally made; nor will they place upon their pages, without explanation or remark, long-vanished titles like these which have proved to be such enigmas to posterity. The only theory which gives a perfectly reasonable and satisfactory account of what we have here and everywhere in these Books is their full inspiration. The Mind whose thoughts they convey to us is a Mind in close and full contact with the times, the personages, and the events with which the writer is dealing. In other words, it is the Mind of God. Therefore, and therefore alone, is it that the years are, so to say, annihilated; that we are set down amid those very times, that we see those personages, and that we ourselves become witnesses of the events. We see and hear as God saw and heard. This absolutely faithful reflection of an ancient past, presented with such consummate ease, simplicity, and naturalness, belongs to the miracle of Revelation.

CHAPTER XVI.

TIRHAKAH, KING OF ETHIOPIA, AND THE SMITING
OF THE ASSYRIAN ARMY.

WHEN the Rab-shakeh returned to seek his master, he found that Sennacherib had passed from Lachish and was besieging Libnah. This is among the ancient cities of Palestine which research has so far failed to identify. It may have been situated nearer to Jerusalem, though not on the direct road, for Sennacherib had evidently intended an early siege of the holy city. This seems to be clear from his irritation on hearing of the advance of an Egyptian army, and on perceiving the absolute necessity of abandoning every other attempt, and of hurrying forward his troops to meet the advancing foe. "And when he heard say of Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia, Behold, he is come out to fight against thee: he sent messengers again unto Hezekiah, king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria" (2 Kings xix. 10).

It may be noted here how well Sennacherib seems to have been served by his Intelligence Department. He appears to have had his spies inside Jerusalem who were in a position to know what went on within the walls. This was the message which Isaiah had

sent back to Hezekiah when the king "sent Eliakim, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the son of Amoz" (verse 2). "And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say to your master, Thus saith the Lord, Be not afraid of the words which thou hast heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. Behold I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and shall return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land" (verses 6, 7).

Hezekiah's apprehensions had been allayed by "the God in whom," as Sennacherib said, "he trusted"; and we can understand the proud conqueror's vexation, when he had to call in his forces and so to give colour to the hope that the assurance of the God of Israel should be fulfilled. Before we note how every word of the Divine message was fulfilled, let me point out a verification which has greatly impressed some of those who have recovered for us the history of those times. The sacred historian mentions "Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia," the report of whose advance had suddenly compelled this change in Sennacherib's plans. This monarch, who now marches out of Egypt to measure his strength with the ravager of Palestine, has left us his portrait and the record of his deeds. "Tirhakah," says Canon Rawlinson, "was an enterprising monarch, who left a name behind which marks him as one of the greatest of Egypt's later kings. . . . He was an enterprising prince, engaged in many wars, and a determined

opponent of the Assyrians. His name is read on the Egyptian monuments as Tahark or Tahrak; and his face, which appears on them, is expressive of strong determination.”*

In some sculptures at Mount Barkal, Tirhaka's portrait is coloured red, not black. This seems to indicate that, though king of Cush, or Ethiopia, he was of Egyptian descent. Referring to these sculptures, Mr. Birch writes: “Tirhaqa, it will be observed, is coloured red . . . like an Egyptian. He is not depicted as an Abyssinian, leading to the conjecture that the Ethiopian rulers were of direct Egyptian origin and descent.”† However that may be, it seems undeniable that his descent upon Egypt was a thoroughly hostile invasion. The son of So had just succeeded in extending his sway over the whole country when the Ethiopian avalanche descended upon him. He was vanquished and slain by Tirhakah. His attack upon the country was not only intended to overthrow the ruler, but also to subjugate the people. The Egyptians are represented upon their own monuments at Thebes as taking their place among the many nationalities subdued by the Ethiopian king. He claims to have conquered from Africa on the one hand to Mesopotamia on the other, and to have defeated the armies of Assyria.

Before mentioning the result of the battle between Sennacherib and Tirhakah, it may be well to notice Professor Sayce's testimony to the superior cor-

* *Egypt and Babylon*, pp. 352, 353.

† *Transactions of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, vol. vii., p. 199.

rectness of the Bible history in this matter, when compared with the Assyrian monuments. "There is another statement in the Assyrian account," he says, "which at first sight appears to conflict with the Biblical history: 'Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia,' is described as 'the king of Egypt.' But we have learned from the Egyptian monuments that Egypt was at the time under Ethiopian domination. Tirhakah was an Ethiopian by birth; it was conquest which made him king of Egypt. The Old Testament is consequently more exactly accurate in calling him 'King of Ethiopia' than the Assyrian description. His army was Egyptian; but the Pharaoh himself was Ethiopian."*

But the deliverance of the Jews was not to come from Egypt. God had always condemned that alliance, and was not to bless it now. Sennacherib has told the story of his encounter with the Egyptian army, and of its result. In the long inscription on the Taylor Cylinder, he says: "The kings of Egypt called forth the archers, chariots (and) horses of the king of Melukhkhi, a force without number, and came to their help; before the city of Eltekeh they arranged their battle array, appealing to their weapons. With the help of Assur, my lord, I fought with them, and accomplished their defeat. The chief of the chariots and the sons of the king of Egypt, and the chief of the chariots of the king of Melukhkhi my hands took alive in the fight." †

* *The Higher Criticism versus the Monuments*, p. 434.

† *Records of the Past* (New Series), vol. vi., p. 89.

The Egyptian host was evidently routed. But Sennacherib never reaped the fruits of his victory. It would seem to have been after the battle, and while the victorious Assyrians were actually on their march to the Egyptian border, that the bolt of heaven fell upon the proud blasphemer of the God of Israel. It fell suddenly, and required no repetition. The army had bivouacked as usual, resting after the hard day's march, and anticipating a similar journey for the morrow. "And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred and four score and five thousand : and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses " (2 Kings xix. 35). The survivors heard in the dimness of that early morning no bustle making answer to the usual call. There was a stillness that first startled and then appalled. It was the stillness of death. Instead of a march that day, there were burials, and the speeding forth of messengers to recall in haste the scattered garrisons. Inside the royal tent, plans of advance and routes for the forces in their triumphal way through Egypt are cast away ; and nothing is thought of save plans and orders for an immediate and swift retreat. For the news of this huge disaster will rush over the subjected peoples like wildfire ; and there is serious danger that, between Tirhakah's hosts in their rear, and the forces of an ever-increasing insurrection in their front, Sennacherib and the remnant of his army may never again behold the plains of Assyria, or even see the waters of the Euphrates.

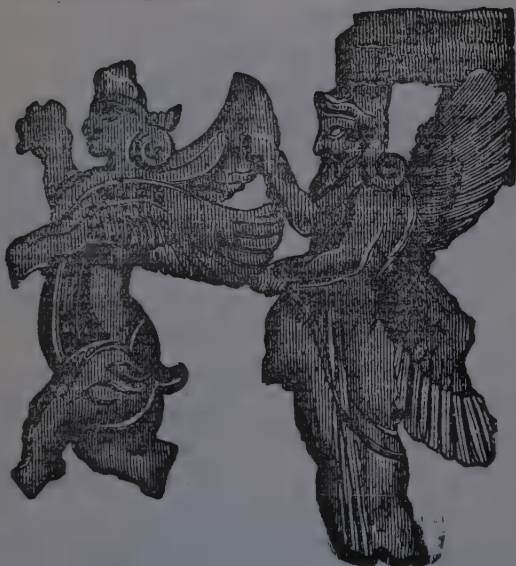
It is, of course, in vain to look to the inscriptions of Sennacherib for any direct confirmation of this Divine intervention. The pages of Herodotus, however, and those of the Babylonian historian Berossus supply what Sennacherib naturally found it inconvenient to publish. For our knowledge of the latter we are indebted to Josephus, who has quoted the passage. It runs as follows: "Now when Sennacherib was returning from the Egyptian war to Jerusalem, he found his army under Rabshakeh in great danger, for God had sent a pestilential distemper upon his army, and on the very first night of the siege, a hundred and eighty-five thousand, with their captains and generals, were destroyed. So the king was in a great dread, and in a terrible agony at this calamity; and being in great fear for his whole army, he fled with the rest of his forces to his own kingdom, and to his city Nineveh; and when he had abode there a little while, he was treacherously assaulted, and died by the hands of his elder sons, Adramelech and Sarasar, and was slain in his own temple which is called Araske. Now these sons of his were driven away on account of the murder of their father by the citizens, and went into Armenia, whilst Assarochoddas took the kingdom of Sennacherib."

In the absence of any access to the work of Berossus, it would be unwise to build too confidently upon the words which speak of Sennacherib's after-stay at Nineveh ("when he had abode there a little while"), and to conclude that Sennacherib had made *two* invasions of Judah, and that this was the later

of the two. Such a conclusion would meet with as serious difficulties in the Assyrian records as in the Bible. It is quite enough to note that in Babylonia, where, as we shall see, the movements of the Assyrians were watched with jealous eyes, this disaster was as fully known as it was in Judæa; that it resulted in the almost total extinction of one of the Assyrian armies; that it immediately closed Sennacherib's invasion of the West; and that the calamity was ascribed to Divine intervention.

The work of Herodotus fortunately still remains with us. He writes: "After this, Sennacherib, king of the Arabians and of the Assyrians, marched a great host against Egypt. Then the warriors of the Egyptians refused to come to the rescue, and the priest (Hephaistos, whose name was Sethos), being driven into a strait, entered into the sanctuary of the temple, and bewailed to the image of the god the danger which was impending over him; and as he was thus lamenting, sleep came upon him, and it seemed to him in his vision that the god came out and stood by him and encouraged him, saying that he should suffer no evil if he went forth to meet the army of the Arabians, for he would himself send him helpers. Trusting in these things seen in sleep, he took with him, they say, those of the Egyptians who were willing to follow him, and encamped in Pelusion, for by this way the invasion came; and not one of the warrior class followed him, but shopkeepers, and artisans, and men of the market. Then after they came, there swarmed by night upon the enemies mice

of the fields, and ate up their quivers and their bows, and moreover the handles of their shields, so that on the next day they fled ; and being without defence of arms, great numbers fell. And at the present time this king stands in the temple of Hephaistos in stone, holding upon his head a mouse, and by letters inscribed he says these words : ‘ Let him who looks upon me learn to fear the gods.’ ” *



FIGURES SUPPORTING AN ASSYRIAN THRONE (*from the Monuments*).

Dr. Pinches, from whose pages I have quoted the above, appends a note to the words—“ Hephaistos, whose name was Sethos ”—to the effect that the king named by Herodotus “ reigned as early as 1350 B.C. ; ” that is, he lived and died some 650 years before the

* *The Old Testament*, pp. 378-382.

time of Tirhakah and of Sennacherib ! This blunder, and the confusion which marks the entire passage, will give the reader a good idea of the kind of Bible we should have had, if it really consisted of traditions picked up by late writers just as Herodotus, in a not much later time—about 250 years only after the event—tried to pick up these traditions of the eastern peoples of his time. The whole story of the mice seems to have arisen from a mistaken interpretation of an ancient Eastern symbol. Referring to the Scripture record of this disaster, Mr. H. O. Robertson argues in his *Voices of the Past* (pp. 209, 210) that the reference must be to “the outbreak of pestilence” among the Assyrian troops. He says: “One remarkable fact serves to corroborate this view. Two hundred and fifty years later, the Greek historian Herodotus found a tradition still current in Egypt about Sennacherib’s attempted invasion of that country. This tradition related that the Egyptian king prayed to the gods for aid, and that the same night a swarm of mice entered the Assyrian camp. . . Now, the mouse was always regarded in the East as the emblem of the plague-boil.” It may, however, have been used also in the more general sense of plague, or Divine infliction; and the statue of the king with the mouse resting on his head may have commemorated Sennacherib himself smitten in this way by the hand of God. But, taking the words of Herodotus as they stand, they give us the testimony of the West, as Berossus has given us the testimony of the East, that Sennacherib was overtaken by a strange and overwhelming

disaster; that it terminated the projected invasion of Egypt; and that the disaster was distinctly and universally assigned to Divine intervention. How are we to account for this essential agreement of the Biblical and of the Babylonian records, and of the Egyptian tradition? If no such event had occurred; if Sennacherib's designs had not been suddenly



FIGURES SUPPORTING AN ASSYRIAN THRONE (*from the Monuments*).

blighted by some such stroke as this; the agreement of these witnesses is without any possible explanation.

And the task of anyone who would attempt to

efface Sennacherib's judgment from the page of history would not end there. He would have to account for some surprising gaps in Sennacherib's own story. He tells us of his siege of Jerusalem, but there is no account of its capture. He plainly attempts, however, to make up for this by putting Hezekiah's tribute in the wrong place—after the siege, and not before it. But why was this campaign, undertaken in his fourth year, his last attempt upon the West? And how does it happen that his after history, as recorded by himself, is almost wholly the record of a life-and-death struggle with revolted Babylonia and with Elam? Let it be admitted that Assyria was so stricken of God as the Bible says it was, and that the tidings of this outran even Sennacherib's swift retreat, and the whole is explained. Oppressed Babylon and Elam saw their chance and seized it. The same explanation is also demanded by the Egyptian records. Tirhakah has described his victories among those of other Egyptian kings; and, as has been well said, it was not their custom to record imaginary triumphs. He is described as defeating the Assyrians, and as capturing Syria and Mesopotamia. These conquests are made after Sennacherib's retreat; and we can explain this sudden reversal of the state of things which Sennacherib paints on his inscriptions as prevailing in the opening of his reign, *only by an unrecorded blow*. It will be seen, therefore, that eastern and western tradition, as well as the silence of the Assyrian king's own inscriptions, bear out the Scripture statements. Sennacherib's western triumphs were arrested by the

hand of One with whom it was hopeless for Assyria to contend.

CHAPTER XVII.

SENNACHERIB'S LAST LABOURS AND DEATH.

THE Scripture closes its account of the great Assyrian monarch with the words: "So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed (broke up his encampment), and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh" (2 Kings xix. 36).

The statement has been confidently made that the Bible represents Sennacherib as being put to death almost immediately upon his return to Assyria. The reader will see how groundless that assertion is. Not only does the Bible not say what it is credited with saying, but it also actually says the opposite. It tells us that Sennacherib dwelt, that is, resided, at Nineveh. This implies a prolonged residence; for it means that he took up his abode and settled there. In other words, the rest of Sennacherib's life had as its leading feature the selection, preparation, and occupation of a new capital.

It is a striking comment upon these words of 2 Kings that Sennacherib himself emphasises this fact in his own account of his last years. After detailing his wars and the slaughter of his Babylonian foes, he says: "In those days, after I had finished the wall of Nineveh for a royal dwelling, and to the astonishment of all peoples

had adorned it; the side building, for keeping in order the train, for the keeping of horses, and all sorts of things which the kings my forefathers had built, it had no foundation, its room was too small, the workmanship was not tasteful. In the course of time its base had become weak, the part underground had given way, and the upper part was in ruins. That palace I tore down completely. A great mass of building material I took out of the ground. The surrounding part of the city I cut off and added to it. The place of the old palace I left. With earth from the river bed I filled it up. The lower ground I raised 200 *tipki* above the level.”*

He then tells us how he built on this new foundation aided by “the wise builders of my royal rule,” and how he “made rooms and greatly enlarged them,” and covered them with his inscriptions.

Layard’s excavations have confirmed Sennacherib’s inscription in every particular. Canon Rawlinson has described the huge structure whose ruins have been gradually bared to the light of day. He says: “But if, as a warrior, Sennacherib deserves to be placed in the foremost rank of the Assyrian kings, as a builder and a patron of art he is still more eminent. The great palace which he raised at Nineveh surpassed in size and splendour all earlier edifices, and was never excelled in any respect except by one later building. The palace of Assur-bani-

* *Records of the Past* (New Series), vol. vi., pp. 99, 100.

pal, built on the same platform by the grandson of Sennacherib, was, it must be allowed, more exquisite in its ornamentation; but even this edifice did not equal the work of Sennacherib in the number of its apartments, or the grandeur of its dimensions. Sennacherib's palace covered an area of above eight acres. It consisted of a number of grand halls and smaller chambers, arranged round at least three courts or quadrangles. . . . It was elevated on a platform, eighty or ninety feet above the plain, artificially constructed and covered with a pavement of bricks. . . .

“It was in the size and the number of his rooms, in the use of passages, and in certain features of his ornamentation, that Sennacherib chiefly differed from former builders. He increased the width of the principal state apartments by one-third, which seems to imply the employment of some new mode or material for roofing. . . . The most striking characteristic of Sennacherib's ornamentation is its strong and marked realism. It was under Sennacherib that the practise first obtained of completing each scene by a background, such as actually existed at the time and place of its occurrence. Mountains, rocks, trees, roads, rivers, lakes, were regularly portrayed, an attempt being made to represent the locality, whatever it might be, as truthfully as the artist's skill and the character of his material rendered possible. Nor was this endeavour limited to the broad and general features of the scene only. The wish evidently was to include all the little accessories



RE-CONSTRUCTION (by Frau Ferguson) OF AN ANCIENT ASSYRIAN PALACE.

which the observant eye of an artist might have noted if he had made his drawing with the scene before him. The species of trees is distinguished in Sennacherib's bas-reliefs; gardens, fields, ponds, reeds, are carefully represented; wild animals are introduced, as stags, boars, and antelopes; birds fly from tree to tree, or stand over their nests feeding the young who stretch up to them; fish disport themselves in the waters; fishermen ply their craft; boatmen and agricultural labourers pursue their avocations; the scene is, as it were, photographed, with all its features—the least and the most important—equally marked, and without any attempt at selection, or any effort after artistic unity.

“ Besides constructing this new palace at Nineveh, Sennacherib seems also to have restored the ancient residence of the kings at the same place. . . . He confined the Tigris to its channel by an embankment of bricks. He constructed a number of canals or aqueducts for the purpose of bringing good water to the capital. He improved the defences of Nineveh, erecting towers of a vast size at some of the gates. And finally he built a temple to the god Nergal at Tarbisi (now Sherif Khan), about three miles from Nineveh, up the Tigris.

“ In the construction of these great works, he made use, chiefly, of the forced labour with which his triumphant expeditions into foreign countries had so abundantly supplied him. Chaldæans, Aramæans, Armenians, Cilicians; and probably also Egyptians, Ethiopians, Elamites, and Jews, were employed by

thousands in the formation of the vast mounds, in the transport and elevation of the colossal bulls, in the moulding of the bricks, and the erection of the walls of the various edifices, in the excavation of the canals, and the construction of the embankments. They wrought in gangs, each gang having a costume peculiar to it, which probably marked its nation. Over each were placed a number of task-masters, armed with staves, who urged on the work with blows, and severely punished any neglect or remissness. The forced labourers often worked in fetters, which were sometimes supported by a bar fastened to the wrist, while sometimes they consisted merely of shackles round the ankles.”*

Such is the story pointed to in the words which tell us that Sennacherib “dwelt at Nineveh.” The Bible has been equally vindicated, through the results of widening research, in its account of the tragedy which closed the earthly existence of this remorseless conqueror and masterful builder. “It came to pass,” we read, “as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword: and they escaped into the land of Armenia. And Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead” (2 Kings xix. 37). The name Nisroch has not yet been found upon the monuments. Some believe it to be the god called Nusku by the Assyrians; but it may be the reading of a name of some Assyrian divinity, which in our ignorance we are pronouncing otherwise to-day. On this and other

* Geo. Rawlinson. *The Five Great Monarchies*, vol. ii., pp. 457-463.

accounts the words before us have fared badly at the hands of critics and of certain archæologists. Sennacherib's end, as described by the Scripture, was one of those bits of "poetic justice" which so rarely happen in actual life, but which enter so often into the dreams of the poet and the products of the romancer. It was impossible, said they, that a Jew could suffer this story to conclude otherwise. This great enemy of God and of the Jewish people must not be allowed to die like other men. But this matter assumed quite a new aspect as the progress of discovery threw one beam of light after another upon this dark spot in Assyria's history. The Babylonian Chronicle, to which we have referred before, contains the following entry :

"The 20th Tebet, Sennacherib was slain by his son in a revolt. Sennacherib reigned twenty-three years in Assyria. From the 20th Tebet to the 2nd Adar the revolt continued in Assyria. The 18th Siwan, his son Esarhaddon occupied the throne in Assyria."

That gave the death-blow to the notion that we had in the notice in the Bible a mere romance, or a tradition coloured by the wishes or the passions of Jewish narrators. Sennacherib had been assassinated, and the assassination was the work of his own household. It will have been observed, however, that the Babylonian Chronicle, while it so fully confirms the Bible account, does not absolutely square with it. It speaks of the assassination as the work of one son—"Sennacherib was slain by his son in a revolt."

Upon this seeming small discrepancy Dr. Hugo Winckler took his stand in the name of Assyriology. He asserted that the Bible statement, that there were *two* assassins, was a mistake. Here, he maintained, the Bible and the monuments were in distinct conflict; the former speaking of two sons dipping their hands in their father's blood, while the latter confined the fratricide to one.

It might have occurred to him that he was placing more upon his supposed authority than it could well bear. It will be observed that the Chronicle does not speak of the act as if it were a simple assassination in which only one criminal could be implicated. It tells us distinctly that the king perished *in a revolt*. There was a conspiracy, therefore, which had laid its plans and had arranged their details. The object aimed at was to seize the supreme power; and the death of Sennacherib was merely one of several incidents necessary to the triumph of the plot. The assassin was not alone in this movement, nor in the unholy act which was essential to its success. There was room enough for another son of the ill-fated king in the attack upon his life. But the Scripture goes farther, and enables us to test its reliability. It gives the names of the sons implicated in the murder. These are Adrammelech and Sharezer. Were these names of the time? Were they borne by children of Sennacherib? and did those who bore them take part in the revolt? To these questions we are able to return replies which are a triumphant vindication of the Bible. There is a passage in Abydenus which

tells us that Sennacherib was slain by his son Adramelus; and that after him Nergilus reigned, who was also slain. Here the first of the two names is found. The assassin was named Adramelus, that is, the Adrammelech of the Bible. But the second name is also given in the same passage. It is this Nergilus, or Nergal. Abydenus places him between Sennacherib and Esarhaddon, the son who eventually succeeded the great king. Nergal was, therefore, the son in whose interest the insurrection was made, and who actually ascended the throne and attempted to reap the fruits of the revolt. Schrader has shown that it was customary among the Assyrians to use half-names. There are cases in which the shortened forms appear even upon the monuments. Now both Nergal and Sharezer, or Sarusur, are both half-names. They are parts of the name Nergal-sarusur ("Nergal protect the king"). The Bible gives us the second part of the name, and Abydenus has recorded the first. These, therefore, *were* names of the time; they were names borne by children of Sennacherib; and these were sons concerned in the revolt. A demonstration can hardly be more perfect than this.

But the Bible adds the information that these two men survived the counter-revolution which snatched the fruits of their crime from their grasp, and that they found an asylum in Armenia. This statement always impressed Assyriologists, because it was known that Armenia was one of the mighty monarchies of the time, and that it was distinctly antagonistic to Assyria. Esarhaddon himself, however, has now

appeared upon the scene, and has told us how the revolt was suppressed. The inscription is so badly damaged at the commencement as to be unreadable. Mr. H. F. Talbot says, in his brief preface to the translation of the inscription : " It is always a pleasure to find an Assyrian inscription which describes, in its own way, events corresponding to those mentioned in the Scripture. The clay-tablets which have been brought home from Assyria are for the most part miserably fractured ; but in no instance is there greater reason to regret the loss of part of an inscription than here. For it is evident that the portion of it which is lost described the murder of Sennacherib by his unnatural sons, and the receipt of the sad intelligence by Esarhaddon, who was then commanding an army on the northern confines of his father's empire. Had it been preserved, we should possibly have found in it the two names of Adrammelech and Sharezer and many particulars of the tragic event."*

What remains of the tablet runs thus : " From my heart I made a vow. My liver was inflamed with rage. Immediately I wrote letters (saying) that I assumed the sovereignty of my Father's House. Then to Ashur, the Moon, the Sun, Bel, Nebo, Nergal, Ishtar of Nineveh, and Ishtar of Arbela I lifted up my hands. They accepted my prayer. In their gracious favour an encouraging oracle they sent to me : ' Go ! Fear not ! We march at thy side ! We aid thy expedition ! For one or two days† I did not

* *Records of the Past*, vol. iii., p. 101, 102.

† " The army," says the translator, " was in Winter quarters, not expecting any service, when it was thus suddenly called upon to act. Hence the delay of some days in getting ready."

Sennacherib's Last Labours and Death.

stir from my position; I did not move the front of my army, and I did not move my rear; the tethering ropes of my horses, trained to the double yoke, I did not remove. I did not strike my camp. But I made haste to provide the needful for the expedition. A great snowstorm in the month of January darkened the sky,* but I did not recede. Then as a *sirin* bird spreads its wings, so I displayed my standards, as a signal to my allies; and with much toil and in haste I took the road to Nineveh. But, getting before my troops, in the hill country of the Khani-Rabbi, all



HUNTING SCENE (*from the Monuments*).

their warriors powerful attacked the front of my army, and discharged their arrows. But the terrors of the great gods my Lords overwhelmed them. When they saw the valour of my great army they retreated backwards. Ishtar, queen of war and battle, who loves my piety, stood by my side. She broke their bows. Their line of battle in her rage she destroyed. To their army she spoke thus: 'An unsparing deity am I.' By her high command I planted my standards where I had intended."

* "He was then in the mountains, where the snow-drifts would soon make the ways impassable to an army" (Translator).

The rest of the column is wanting. The following from the pages of Schrader supplements what has just been given. The battle was fought, it seems, in South-east Cappadocia, or Lesser Armenia, close to the Euphrates, and it was terminated by a revolt of the troops led by the rebels. The inscription concludes with the words: "In their ranks (literally, 'in their assembly') resounded the cry: 'This (is) our king.'"* Abydenus says that the defeated princes then threw themselves into a fortified city of the Byzantines, that is, a city belonging to Armenia, and so escaped from the midst of their mutinous army. It is well to observe that Esarhaddon does not speak of *one* adversary merely. He speaks of "*their* warriors," and of "*their* army." Plainly, therefore, he is confronted by more than one brother. The will of Sennacherib (which has been discovered) throws some light upon these dark intrigues. "It is," says Professor Sayce, "the earliest example of a Will extant. Esarhaddon was not the eldest son, and at the time this will was made, was not heir-presumptive to the throne. He was, however, Sennacherib's favourite son; and the treasure named in the Will was accordingly deposited with certain priests of Nebo to be paid over to him after his father's death." The Will is as follows:—

I, Sennacherib, King of multitudes, King of Assyria, have given chains of gold, stores of ivory, a *cup* of gold, crowns and chains besides, all the riches of which there are heaps, crystal

* *Cuneiform Inscriptions*, etc., vol. ii., p. 17.

and another precious stone and bird's stone; one and a-half manehs, two and a-half cibi, according to their weight; to Esarhaddon my son," etc.*

The presence of Esarhaddon also at the head of a powerful, and evidently too, *the* army of Assyria, indicated the king's preference. The conspiracy was doubtless hastened by the conviction that, if action was longer delayed, it would be too late.

There is one item in the Scripture account which still remains. Sennacherib is said to have been slain in the temple while worshipping his god. It was a spot which a daring hand would find the fittest for the deed. Here the king would be entirely separated from his guards and from his friends. He entered the sanctuary of the god, accompanied by his son or sons, or some trusted companion. And there in the presence of the priest the deed was done, and for the moment successfully concealed. That the assassination was actually carried out in this way is proved by the discovery of an altar, an inscription on which says that it had stood in the place where Sennacherib was murdered. That place must, of course, have been a temple.

* *Records of the Past*, vol. i., p. 138.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DATE OF SENNACHERIB'S INVASION, AND THE
EMBASSY FROM THE KING OF BABYLON.

THE chronological disagreement between the Scripture and the Assyrian records is (with one exception, which I shall notice immediately) confined to the period covered by the reigns of Tiglath-pileser and his successor Shalmaneser, the immediate predecessor of Sargon. In the dynastic troubles through which Assyria passed during that period, the Assyrian records suffered, and the labours of Sennacherib may not have sufficed to completely repair the loss. It is possible also that omissions may have been made on account of dynastic rivalries and animosities. As to these things, no certainty is at present obtainable, and the disagreements between the Assyrian and the Biblical records during this period must await the results of further research.

There is, however, one, and only one, discord between the chronologies from Sargon downwards. With that one exception there is absolute harmony; and the question to which I now ask the reader's attention is whether even this solitary note of discord is not due to a misunderstanding of our own. The date of Sargon's accession is the date of the capture of Samaria—722 B.C. This event (as we have seen) took place in the *sixth* year of Hezekiah's reign

(2 Kings xviii. 10). This date of 722 B.C. for the fall of Samaria is in absolute agreement with the Scripture reckoning. But now comes the discord. The very next date which the Bible gives is that of Sennacherib's invasion. This, we are told, happened in the *fourteenth* year of Hezekiah (verse 13). The fourteenth year of Hezekiah would bring us down other eight years, that is, to 714 B.C. But Sargon reigned seventeen years after the taking of Samaria, and Sennacherib's invasion took place in the fourth year of his own reign. This brings us down to twenty-one years after the capture of Samaria, or to 701 B.C. There is thus a difference of thirteen or fourteen years between the two chronologies.

Now this very period of thirteen or fourteen years seems to me to suggest a solution of the difficulty. I give it only as a suggestion to be set down at the reader's valuation after he has considered the facts. The Scripture tells us that Hezekiah's reign was divided into two portions. He reigned in all twenty-nine years (2 Kings xviii. 2); but fifteen of these years were graciously granted as a lengthening of his life and reign. "In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz came to him, and said to him, Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live" (2 Kings xx. 1). The king "turned his face to the wall"—it was all the solitude which, king though he was, he was then able to secure—and in tears and silence lifted his cry to God. The prophet was stopped on his way through the palace court,

and was turned back with a message of consolation. The king's prayer had been heard. "Turn again," said the word of the Lord, "and tell Hezekiah the captain of My people, Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the Lord. And I will add unto thy days fifteen years: and I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for Mine own sake, and for My servant David's sake" (verses 5, 6).

The reader will have been struck by this reference to the deliverance of Jerusalem, and to the king of Assyria. Seeing that this sickness of Hezekiah was immediately followed by these last fifteen years of his twenty-nine years' reign, the sickness must have occurred *at the close of his fourteenth year*. But, if Sennacherib's invasion was still an event of the future *at the end* of his fourteenth year, it could not possibly have occurred *in* the fourteenth year, reckoning from the beginning of his reign. This interpretation is clearly excluded. The whole of the first fourteen years had already been exhausted at the time of the sickness. Up to this time, according to 2 Kings xx. 6, the Assyrian invasion and the escape of Jerusalem are still in the future. They are matters of prophecy and not of history. They are experiences still in front of Hezekiah and of the Jews. Is it not clear, then, from this that the fourteenth year spoken of must be *the fourteenth year of the renewed life-span granted to Hezekiah?* I am persuaded that a deep

significance is frequently, if not always, attached to the Scripture use of figures, and that we have in them Divine suggestions which lift them entirely out of the plane of ordinary chronology. It is clear, I think, from the place given to these incidents in the Book of Isaiah, that Hezekiah and the Jews of his time are in some way types of the Jews in the last days when the blast of the terrible ones shall be as a storm against the wall (Isaiah xxv. 4). Into this we cannot enter here, and all that we have now to do is to note how closely the Scripture itself shuts us up to the conclusion that the fourteenth year of 2 Kings xviii. 13 is not the fourteenth year from the commencement of Hezekiah's reign, and that it must therefore be the fourteenth from the beginning of the second period, of the renewed life given to the king.

Now, taking the words in this way, is the difficulty removed? If it is, that will be some assurance that we have not erred in giving heed to this indication. Sennacherib's invasion of Judæa is fixed by the Eponym Canon for the year 701 B.C. Hezekiah's sixth year, being the year of Sargon's accession, is fixed by the Canon as 722 B.C. His fourteenth year will bring us down another eight years from that date of 722, that is, to 714 B.C. From this time begins the second period of Hezekiah's reign. Thirteen years of that have completely gone, and he is in the fourteenth year of this extension—of this day of grace—when Sennacherib's invasion occurs. Now, if we take these thirteen completed years from 714 B.C. (the time from which the day of grace begins), we

get 701 B.C. That is the very year of Sennacherib's invasion, according to the Assyrian Canon.

It may be well to notice also that the order of time is not followed by the historian. We have been told already of Sennacherib's attempt upon the city, of his blasphemies, and of his punishment and departure, in the nineteenth chapter. All that plainly transpired *after* the sickness. But, with the evident intention of leaving with the reader this picture of the sickness of Hezekiah, of God's mercy toward him, and the prophecy regarding the carrying away to Babylon—all this is reserved as the closing word of the king's history. It has been pointed out that the embassy from Babylon must have come to Jerusalem before Sennacherib's invasion. That is shown by the condition of Hezekiah's treasure chambers. We read that the king showed them "all the house of his precious things, the silver and the gold," *etc.* (xx. 13). But, had this visit taken place after Sennacherib's invasion, the silver and the gold would not have been there. The whole of the silver and of the gold would have been carried to Nineveh; for Hezekiah had to strip the temple doors and pillars to add to that which was in his own treasury, in order to make up the thirty talents of gold demanded by the Assyrian king, and we read that "he gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the Lord, and in the treasures of the king's house" (II. Kings xviii. 15). Had the embassy arrived, then, *after* Sennacherib's invasion, the silver and gold, and the other precious things, would not have been there to show. Here again, there-

fore, it is proved that Hezekiah's *first* fourteenth year cannot have been that of the Assyrian invasion. For his sickness occurred when he had reigned fourteen years, and the embassy from the Babylonian king to congratulate him on his recovery must have been sent afterwards—very probably in the following year. This confirms the conclusion to which we were previously led, that the Assyrian invasion took place in Hezekiah's *second* fourteenth year, and not in his first.

Can Assyriologists tell us anything regarding Berodach-Baladan—or, as he is named in Isaiah, Merodach-Baladan (xxxix. 1)? Fortunately, they are able to tell us much, and their information has a very close bearing upon the incident referred to in the Scripture. “Merodach-Baladan, ‘the son of Yagina,’ as he is called in the inscriptions,” says Prof. Sayce, “was a Kaldû or Chaldæan from the marshes of Southern Babylonia. He had taken advantage of the death of the Assyrian king, Shalmaneser IV., in B.C. 722, to enter Babylon and seize the throne. For twelve years he governed the country. Sargon was employed elsewhere, and his wars in the north and west left him no leisure for restoring Babylonia to Assyria. Gradually, however, the enemies who had threatened the frontiers of the empire were overthrown and subdued, and a time came when Sargon was free to turn his eyes towards the south. Year by year he had grown more powerful, and the Assyrian army had become irresistible in attack. It was clear that it could not be long before a fresh Assyrian invasion of Babylonia would be attempted; and even

with the help of his Elamite friends, Merodach-Baladan could not hope to resist it successfully. His sole chance was to divide the forces of the foe by exciting trouble in the west." *

It may help us to understand Merodach-Baladan's position and present purpose, if we listen for a moment to what Sargon king of Assyria has to say about him. In a long inscription, in which he gives us his account of the various foes whom he had subdued, he says: "Merodach-Baladan, son of Jakin, king of Chaldæa, the fallacious, the persistent in enmity, did not respect the memory of the gods, he trusted in the sea, and in the retreat of the marshes; he eluded the precepts of the great gods and refused to send his tributes. . . . He had excited all the nomadic tribes of the deserts against me. He prepared himself for battle and advanced. During twelve years, against the will of the gods of Babylon, the town of Bel which judges the gods, he had excited the country of the Sumers and Accads, and had sent ambassadors to them." † The rest of the account describes the campaign and the terrific vengeance taken upon the Babylonians. Merodach-Baladan had seen clearly that he was soon to be dealt with, and had understood the importance of providing other employment for Sargon's forces.

Two questions naturally suggest themselves. Do the chronologies agree in this instance? Did the time of Hezekiah's recovery coincide with the day of

* *The Higher Criticism versus the Monuments*, p. 425.

† *Records of the Past*, vol. ix., pp. 13, 14.

Merodach-Baladan's need? The Babylonian king began to reign, as we have just been informed, in 722 B.C. He reigned twelve years; and his reign, consequently, endured from 722 to 710. We have also been told that 722 B.C. was Hezekiah's sixth year. His first year was, therefore, 727 B.C. We can now with perfect ease determine the time of the Babylonian embassy according to the Scripture reckoning. It must have arrived at Jerusalem *after* Hezekiah's fourteenth year, and very probably at the close of his fifteenth year. Now, if we take fifteen from 727, this will bring us down to 712 B.C. as the date of the embassy according to the Scripture. Now this was just two years before Merodach-Baladan's overthrow, and it must, therefore, have been a time when that astute monarch was straining every nerve to avert the coming blow. The agreement of the Bible chronology with the Assyrian is in this, as in other instances, absolutely perfect.

Our other question is—does the Bible account reveal anything of the Babylonian monarch's purpose? We are told that the ambassadors came to congratulate Hezekiah. In Isaiah (xxxix. 1) we read that he also “sent letters and a present to Hezekiah: for he had heard that he had been sick, and was recovered.” That was a very fair pretext; but does the Bible indicate that there was anything else beneath this fair exterior? There is one significant phrase in 2 Kings xx. 13. We read there that “Hezekiah hearkened unto them.” The ambassadors had something for his private ear; and it was plainly

something which he weighed and received with favour. Then came his invitation to them to view his treasures. And that viewing was a serious business; for he himself tells the prophet that there was nothing among his treasures which he had not shown to them. Now, Hezekiah was not a child; nor was he a man who on any other occasion proved himself to be the slave of vanity. This, we may be certain, was no idle and boastful display of his wealth to foreign visitors. It was a disclosure of the extent of his resources to those who with himself hated and dreaded the encroachments of a common and remorseless foe. If Merodach-Baladan desired to have resistance organised in the west, Hezekiah was no less pleased to know that a powerful resistance would be offered in the east. More might have come from those interviews. The budding alliance with Babylon might have borne fruit in frightful disasters for Judæa, and the offered friendship would have inevitably brought with it loss of faith and of purity for court and people. It was an hour of temptation, and God plucked his servant from the closing snare.

These side-lights enable us to understand the Bible story; but they also do more. They explode the notion that this story is legend and myth, and show that every phrase and word, like a skilled painter's touch, sets before us a living picture of the men and the time which could have been painted only by One who saw and fully knew all these things.

CHAPTER XIX.

MANASSEH, JOSIAH, AND PHARAOH-NECHO.

THE last years of the kingdom of Judah were marked by striking indications of decay. There were periods of repentance and of eager seeking to sweep from the land all that had offended God. Then followed a deep and long plunge downward into the pollutions of heathenism. Ahaz the father of Hezekiah had "sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus . . . and . . . gathered together the vessels of the house of the God"—the Hebrew says "*the* God," for there was no other—"and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of the God, and shut up the doors of the house of the Lord, and he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem. And in every several city of Judah he made high places to burn incense unto other gods, and provoked to anger the Lord God of his fathers" (2 Chronicles xxviii. 23-25). And now Hezekiah is succeeded by Manasseh who "made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen, whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel" (2 Chronicles xxxiii. 9). He caused his children to pass through the fire to Moloch. He introduced the obscene worship of the goddess Astarté; built altars in the very Temple courts "for all the host of heaven;" and placed a graven statue in the house of God.

"Moreover Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another" (2 Kings xxii. 16).

Contrary to what critical theories might lead us to expect, which represent the Old Testament history as traditions shaped by a theology which sought to terrify wickedness and to encourage strict fidelity to Judaism, Manasseh's is the very longest of Israelitish and Jewish reigns. He "was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem" (2 Kings xxi. 1).

And not only was his reign long, but with one exception it was also unvisited by punishment. The exception, which is narrated only in 2 Chronicles, will come before us immediately when we touch upon those Books. Meanwhile, there is nothing to which our attention is here called except the length of Manasseh's reign, and the notices of him in the Assyrian annals. He ascended the throne in the year 698. This date is fixed by statements to which reference was made in the last chapter. Hezekiah began his reign in 727 B.C.; and, as he reigned twenty-nine years, Manasseh must have commenced to reign in 698 B.C., and have ended his long career of fifty-five years in 643 B.C. Are there any indications that a king called Manasseh (1) did reign in Judæa at that time? and (2) that his reign was of this prolonged kind?

We have already seen something of Esarhaddon, that son of Sennacherib who avenged his father's murder and succeeded him upon the throne. "Esarhaddon," says Maspero, "is one of the most original

and attractive figures in Assyrian history. He was as active and resolute as Assurnazirpal or Tiglath-pileser; but he joined to these qualities of theirs neither their austerity to his subjects, nor their ferocity to the vanquished.”* He ascended the throne about 681 B.C.; that is, he began to reign over Assyria when Manasseh had been seventeen years upon the throne of Judah. His reign extended to 667 B.C. He thus guided the destinies of Assyria, and of the wide dominion over which it ruled, for fourteen years. The close of his reign, therefore, brings us down to the thirty-first year of Manasseh. Is there anything, then, to show that Esarhaddon was aware of Manasseh’s existence? An inscription found at Kouyounyik (from which I have already quoted) contains in its fifth column the following passage:—

I assembled the Kings of Syria, and of the nations
beyond the sea :

Baal King of Tyre : Manasseh King of Judah :
Kadumukh King of Edom : Mitzuri King of
Moab : *etc., etc.*

Here Manasseh, King of Judah, is placed second on the list of the subject kings of Syria.

Another inscription tells of fierce vengeance taken upon Sidon. Esarhaddon describes himself as “Conqueror of the city Sidon, which is on the sea, sweeper away of all its villages; its citadel and residence I rooted up, and into the sea I flung them. Its places of *justice* I destroyed. Abdimilkutti its king, who away from my arms into the middle of the sea had

* *Histoire Ancienne*, p. 456.

fled, like a fish from out of the sea I caught him, and I cut off his head. . . . Men and women without number, oxen and sheep and mules I swept them all off to Assyria. I assembled the Kings of Syria and the sea-coast, all of them. (The city of Sidon) I built anew, and I called it 'The City of Esarhaddon.' Men, captured by my arms, natives of the lands and seas of the East within it I placed to dwell, and I set my own officers in authority over them."



This chastisement was followed by others, which displayed a like severity; and it might have been imagined that it was to this scene of desolation and horror that the twenty-two kings, of whom Manasseh was one, were summoned. But this second inscription makes it plain that the place of assembly was Nineveh. After describing the re-construction of his "royal palace in the centre of Nineveh," and his causing "crowds" of captives to work in fetters in making bricks, "I assembled," Esarhaddon says, in this second inscription, "twenty-two kings of the land of Syria, and of the sea-coasts and the islands, all of them, and I passed them in review. Great beams and rafters of *abimi* wood (ebony), cedar and cypress from the mountains of Sirar and of Lebanon, divine images, bas-reliefs . . . from the mountain quarries, the place of their origin, for the adornment

of my palace, with labour and difficulty unto Nineveh they brought along with them.”* There, at the head of his people, conveying his portion of this heavy tribute of wood and stone, we must picture the perverse king of Judah.

The death of Esarhaddon brings us down, as we have just seen, to Manasseh's thirty-first year; and his reign continued other twenty-four years. Esarhaddon raised his favourite son Assurbanipal to share the sovereignty with him. He reigned for the long period of forty-two years, from 668 to 626 B.C. This second reign entirely covers, therefore, the remaining twenty-four years left to Manasseh. Does Assurbanipal know anything, then, of this Jewish king? Is it true that the Jewish king's reign was as prolonged as the Scripture says it was, and was he reigning at this very time? These are questions to which those who know what the Bible is have an immediate and decisive answer. They know that the Bible stands alone in all literature for its utter and unfailing reliability, and is indeed the only written Word which is “true from the beginning.” But we have to minister in an age in which we encounter many who are asking just such questions as these; and, seeing that God has condescended in His gracious Providence to bring at this very time these witnesses from the long-undisturbed dust of ages, we may be assured that there is timely service done in hearing and in publishing their testimony.

“Assurbanipal, the Sardanapalus of the Greeks,”

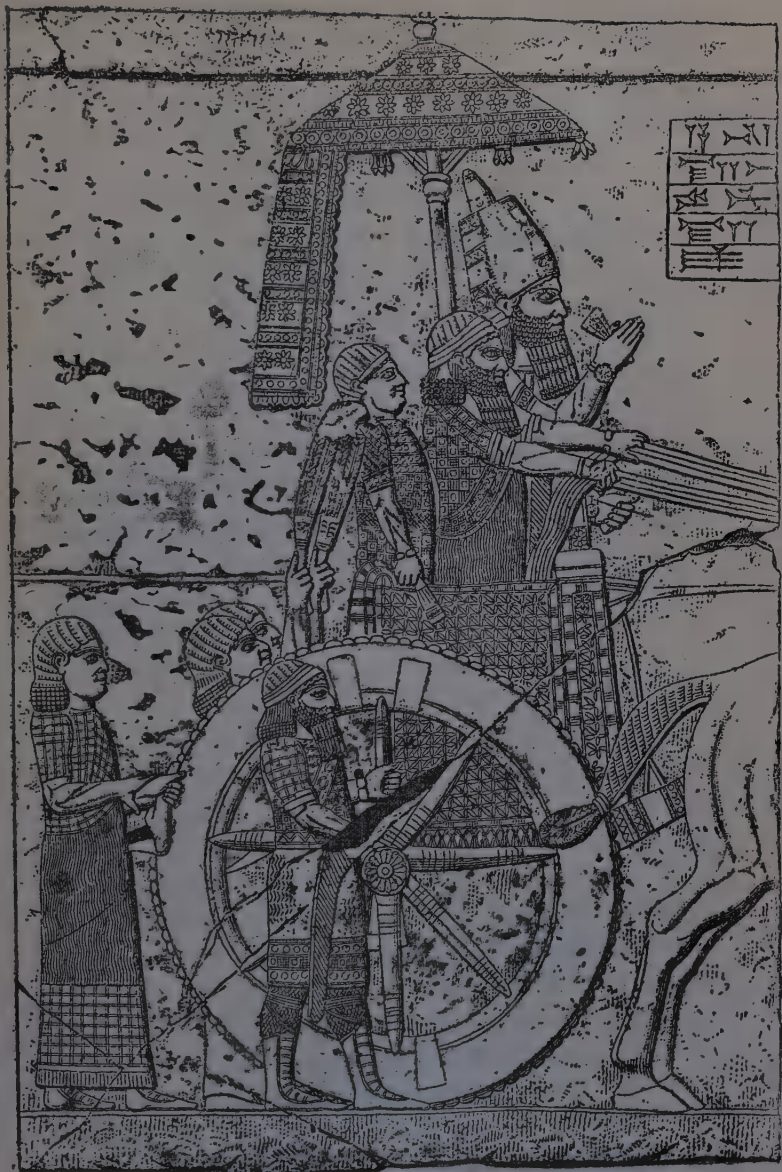
* *Records of the Past*, vol. iii., pp. 119, 120.

was, says George Smith, "the greatest and most celebrated of Assyrian monarchs. He was the principal patron of Assyrian literature, and the greater part of the grand library of Nineveh was written during his reign."* "Almost the last of his race," writes Maspero, "it was he whose domination extended the farthest, and who surpassed his predecessors in activity, in energy, in cruelty; just as if Assyria, feeling itself near its ruin, had wished to unite in a single man all the qualities which had made its greatness, and all the faults which had sullied its glory."† In an elaborate inscription, which George Smith describes as "one of the finest Assyrian historical documents," Assurbanipal shows us how the Assyrian storm swept over the lands. He tells us that as he was engaged in a State procession in Nineveh one came and told him of Tirhakah's fresh invasion of Egypt. "Over these things," he says, "my heart was bitter, and much afflicted. By command of Assur and the goddess Assuritu I gathered my powerful forces, which Assur and Ishtar had placed in my hands; to Egypt and Ethiopia I directed the march. In the course of my expedition, twenty-two kings of the side of the sea and middle of the sea, all tributaries dependent upon me, to my presence, came and kissed my feet."‡ Among these twenty-two kings, we might have concluded that Manasseh no doubt had his place. But in another inscription which supplements this, Assurbanipal has

* *Assyrian Discoveries*, p. 317.

† *Histoire Ancienne*, p. 471.

‡ *Assyrian Discoveries*, pp. 322, 323.



KING ASSURBANIPAL.

given a list of these twenty-two kings; and, just as in his father's list, Manasseh's is the second name. The list runs: "Baal, king of Tyre; Mannaseh, king of Judah," *etc.* Here, therefore, the Scripture account of Manasseh finds its reflection in the annals of Assyria. Manasseh lives and reigns in this very time; and his reign is a long one. There are three kings on the Assyrian throne in his time—Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, and Assurbanipal. That Manasseh continued beyond the end of Sennacherib's reign Esarhaddon proves by his mention of Manasseh as among his tributary kings. And in like manner Assurbanipal shows us Manasseh still upon the throne of Judah after the death of Esarhaddon.

Nothing occurs in the story of Amon's disappointing two years' reign, ending in his assassination through a palace-conspiracy, which links it with the story of the great world that lay around Judæa. The next notice which touches the historical personages and events of the time is found in the record of Josiah's reign. As in Assurbanipal's case the glory of Assyria flamed out before expiring in eternal night, so the glory of Judah flashed up into something of its ancient splendour just before the throne of David was laid in the dust, where it shall lie till He come whose right it is. Josiah ascended the throne about 641 B.C., when he was only eight years old. At the age of sixteen, "while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father" (2 Chron. xxxiv. 3). The promise of those early days was splendidly fulfilled. During the rest of his long reign of thirty-

one years the attempt to lead the people back to God was steadily and zealously pursued. But Judah had gone too far; and the popular power to respond to the king's appeal was gone. There was external reform, but no inward returning. The first sign that the day of mercy had reached its limit, and that the day of judgment was about to begin, came in the cutting down of Judah's last hope. Assyria had fallen on evil times. The armies of the long-oppressed peoples were closing in upon it on every side. Necho, with the Egyptian host, was pressing onward to the Euphrates to join them. But to loyal-hearted Josiah there was an irresistible appeal in Assyria's need. He and the rest had dwelt securely under its shadow. Whatever others might do, he could not lightly cast away his oft-professed allegiance. He gathered his army together and threw himself between Necho and the Euphrates. The result was the defeat of the Jews and the death of the king. "In his days Pharaoh-Nechoh, king of Egypt, went up against the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates: and king Josiah went against him; and he slew him at Megiddo when he had seen him. And his servants carried him in a chariot dead from Megiddo, and brought him to Jerusalem, and buried him in his own sepulchre."

The fact that this is the only reference to Assyria in Josiah's history is significant. Till this last year of the king's life the great power of the time is not once mentioned in connection with himself or his people either in Kings or in Chronicles. This is in perfect accord with the political conditions of the time. The

later years of Assurbanipal were spent in fierce conflicts with Babylonia in the south, and with Elam in the south-east. "To preserve their authority," says Maspero, "the kings of Assyria were constrained to run without relaxation from one extremity of their empire to the other. Every war, which lasted some years, and detained their armies in the east, relaxed the bonds of allegiance in the west. It was necessary to re-commence the conquest, or to give up the acquisitions made in previous expeditions. Assurbanipal, worn out by his struggle with Elam, was unable to continue war perpetually, and he resigned his rights to the sovereignty over Egypt, over the Tubal, and over Lydia."* He was succeeded by kings who seemed to have inherited neither his ability nor his resources. Assyria fell, and ceased to be numbered among the kingdoms of the earth.

And now, in the mention of Necho and of his advance against Assyria in the very end of Josiah's reign and life, we have again the most absolute accord with the facts of the time. Josiah commenced to reign in 639 B.C. He reigned thirty-one years, and consequently died in 608 B.C., a date which the reader will kindly note. Psammetichus, about twenty-eight years earlier, in 636 B.C., had subdued, by the help of Greek mercenaries, the various princes who had divided among them the ancient heritage of the Pharaohs. A large number of the native Egyptian soldiers, disgusted at the king's preference for the despised and hated foreigners, abandoned the country

* *Histoire Ancienne*, p. 471.

and found an asylum in Ethiopia. The weakness caused by this desertion prevented Psammetichus from taking advantage of the increasing weakness of Assyria. But the power and the opportunity were now found by his son Necho II. Now, when did Necho march his army through Palestine and across Syria to the Euphrates? "In the spring of 608," says Maspero, "Necho quitted Memphis and penetrated into Asia."* This is the very year, according to the chronology of the Second Book of Kings, in which the battle was fought at Megiddo and Josiah was slain. There is, however, one note of discord in Maspero's reference. He believes that the Egyptian king was marching against Babylon, and not against Assyria. He seems to assume that Assyria had already fallen; and that Babylon, under Nabopalassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar, had become the great power of the East. But, if this were so, why should Necho advance to attack it? It had had no time as yet, even though we should admit that Assyria had already fallen, to subdue, or even to threaten, the West. Besides, Maspero appears to be at variance with himself in this matter. He says, on an earlier page: "Assurachiddin," the last king of Assyria, "betrayed by the fate of arms, shut himself up in Nineveh, defended himself there as long as he could, and burned himself alive in his palace rather than fall alive into the hands of the foe (608, 600?)."† Of the two dates here given, 608 is the earlier, and is the highest date which in his judgment can be assigned

* *Ibid.*, p. 538. † Page 516.

to the fall of Nineveh and the overthrow of Assyrian power. With this, Schrader agrees; and thus research has once more justified the Scripture even in the minutest details. Necho advanced to the Euphrates "against the king of Assyria," and the date of his march coincides exactly with that of the death of Josiah.

CHAPTER XX.

THE FALL OF JERUSALEM.

THE fatal tempest clouds were gathering over the Jewish kingdom. It stood too close to the path of the combatants for the great prize of the world's empire to be neglected in the struggle. Necho, after the defeat of Josiah, had hurried on to Carchemish, that great city on the Euphrates whose possession secured that of the vast territory on the west of the river. Until quite recent times, nothing was known of Carchemish except its great importance in antiquity. The frequent references to it upon the monuments removed all doubt as to that. But as to where the city had been placed, and with what mounds of ruins its site was to be identified, there were opinions enough, but no certainties.

A fact like this ought to be seriously considered by

those who so readily accept the critical representations as to Old Testament history being legend and tradition. They might, with much advantage, ask themselves whether they have considered what legend and tradition really are. One prominent characteristic of these is their independence of geography. Cities can be set down anywhere that is temporarily convenient. And there is another fact which ought to be very seriously weighed. Wherever we lose the guidance of exact history, it is only with the greatest difficulty, and at the cost of many blunders, that investigation and scholarship are able to make up for the loss. Carchemish was generally identified with the Circesium of the ancient geographers. There were references in the inscriptions, however, which could hardly be reconciled with that belief; and Maspero contended in 1873 that it should be identified with an ancient city a little to the east of Aleppo, and some miles distant from the Euphrates. Both these learned opinions, the former of which had misled almost everyone, have now been finally set aside. Shortly before his death, Geo. Smith indicated the true site. Half-way between the villages of Sadjour and Biredjik is a mound of ruins called Djerablous. It is of great extent. Sculptures, bas-reliefs, and inscriptions in the ancient Hittite writing have been taken from the mounds. These testify to a very advanced civilisation. The caravan route, strange to say, still passes the spot, thus indicating one of the sources of the ancient city's wealth and power. The walls of the city were between two and three miles in circum-

ference; but there are indications that the suburbs extended to a considerable distance, especially on the south along the banks of the Euphrates, where traces are met with of ancient irrigation works.

In the imminent break-up of the Assyrian Empire, Necho desired to make sure of its western portion; that is, of all that lay on the west of the Euphrates. In this he had succeeded. He had driven the Assyrians before him, taken Carchemish and garrisoned it, and had now returned to Riblah. "Now, Riblah," says Mr. Harper, "was on the high road between Palestine and Babylon, and the place or headquarters of the Egyptian monarch. It is still called Riblah—on the right bank of the Orontes, thirty miles north-east of Baalbec. Some few houses and other ruins, surrounded by a vast and fertile plain, make it an admirable camping-ground for a host. It is really a centre from which roads diverge to the Euphrates, Nineveh; or by Palmyra to Babylon. The southern roads, leading to Lebanon, to Palestine, or Egypt, mark it as a fine strategic position."*

In a bundle of traditions, and still more in a collection of legends, it would be astonishing to find a word mentioned which had so much as this behind it for after discovery to lay its hand upon. If, however, the Mind, which is here opening the past to us, has everything fully and perpetually in view, and is, in one word, Omniscient, this mention of Riblah is at once explained. Having arrived at this centre, and arranging the affairs of his new dominion, it was

* *The Bible and Modern Discoveries*, pp. 469, 470.

natural to expect that Necho would assert his newly-won sovereignty in that little kingdom, which alone had dared to withstand his march to the Euphrates. The newly-appointed king, Jehoahaz, who had reigned only three months, and who seems to be among those who are waiting upon Necho at Riblah, is fettered and taken with the conqueror to Egypt to grace his triumph. Another son of Josiah's, Eliakim, is selected by Necho, who changes his name to Jehoiakim, and sets him upon the Jewish throne.

But the glory of Egypt under Necho, like that of Assyria under Assurbanipal, was only the last flicker of an expiring flame. When Nebuchadnezzar took Carchemish and over-ran the west, Egypt finally abandoned its eastern possessions. "The king of Egypt came not again any more out of his land: for the king of Babylon had taken from the river of Egypt unto the river Euphrates all that pertained to the king of Egypt" (2 Kings xxiv. 7). Necho, beaten by Nebuchadnezzar at Carchemish, strained every nerve to recruit his forces, and awaited an opportunity to lead his army eastward again. But the opportunity never came. "Two years after" (the invasion of Syria by Nebuchadnezzar), writes Maspero, "Necho died without having encountered the occasion which he sought, and his son Psametik II., still a child when placed upon the throne, had no leisure to undertake anything against Asia: an incursion into Ethiopia distinguished his reign, but he disappeared before he had attained his majority." *

* *Histoire Ancienne*, p. 545.

But the avenger, whose advent had been predicted through Isaiah more than a century before, had now appeared. Babylon, the most ancient mistress of the nations, laid her hand once more upon the sceptre of the kingdoms. The new empire endured for no more than eighty-eight years, and has only one great memory connected with it, that of Nebuchadnezzar, whose name has become a household word in all lands through the record of him preserved in the Book of Daniel. His portrait has been handed down to us on an ancient cameo. Round the portrait is read the king's name in Babylonian. The inscription is as follows:—



That is, *Ana Marduk bil-su Nabukudurussur sar Babilu ana balati-su ibus*: "To Merodach his lord, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has made this for his life."

The cameo is now in the Berlin Museum. It was accepted by the German Assyriologists as a genuine portrait of the conqueror of Judæa. But Lenormant believed that it represented not the great king, but some later monarch bearing the same name. Schrader, however, has since gone more fully into the matter,

and has justified the earlier belief. To Lenormant the portrait seemed too Grecian to be genuine. But we know, in spite of critical delusions, that Greek influence was already touching the East, just as it had laid its hand also at this very time upon Egypt. The portrait shows the great king in the beauty and vigour of his early manhood. The long and highly-adorned



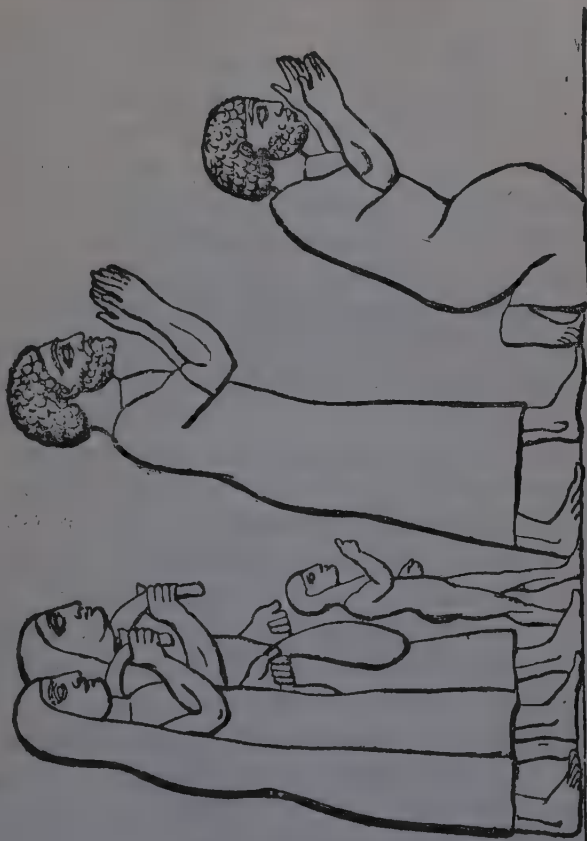
PORTRAIT OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR (*after a photograph taken from the ancient cameo*).

beard of the Assyrians is discarded. The face is clean shaven. The head is covered with a helmet, which protects not only the head, but also the back of the neck. The face shows ability, decision, and the consciousness of command. It is, in short, a Napoleonic face.

Nebuchadnezzar's inscriptions are numerous and full; but they afford almost no direct—although many and striking indirect—confirmations of Bible statements. This is entirely owing to the fact that these inscriptions deal only with thanksgivings to the gods,

the erection of temples to their honour, or with other labours in building and irrigation. We have no record, for example, of this campaign against Judah; and the inscriptions are equally silent as to the struggle of the new Babylonian empire with Egypt. "We possess," says Schrader, "a series of inscriptions on bricks and clay cylinders belonging to this king; also an inscribed cameo with the royal portrait. By far the larger number of these inscriptions—some of which are of considerable extent—are exclusively occupied, when they are not of a religious character, with the royal buildings at Babel and Borsippa. This is a general characteristic of Babylonian, as opposed to Assyrian, inscriptions—a feature that, in the interests of historical knowledge, is greatly to be deplored."* It is highly probable, however, that other inscriptions exist, and that the excavations at Babylon and elsewhere may bring them to light. But meanwhile we possess only monuments of the character I have described. But the carrying away of the Jews was, as we know, a deed altogether in keeping with the warfare of the times. It followed the policy of the Assyrian kings, which was now the long-established method of dealing with refractory or dangerous populations. We have similar confirmation in regard to Nebuchadnezzar's treatment of Zedekiah. When further resistance to the besiegers had become impossible, Zedekiah fled from Jerusalem. The plan for his flight seems to have been well thought out. Instead of breaking out on the west or the south, and

of making for Egypt—a course readily anticipated, and one which the Chaldeans must have taken measures to prevent—he made by some probably



CAPTIVE JEWS BEGGING FOR MERCY (from the Monuments).

circuitous and unobserved way for the north-east. He then swept down the pass to Jericho in order to cross the Jordan, and to flee by Moab and Edom, and to hide himself possibly in the depths of Arabia. So

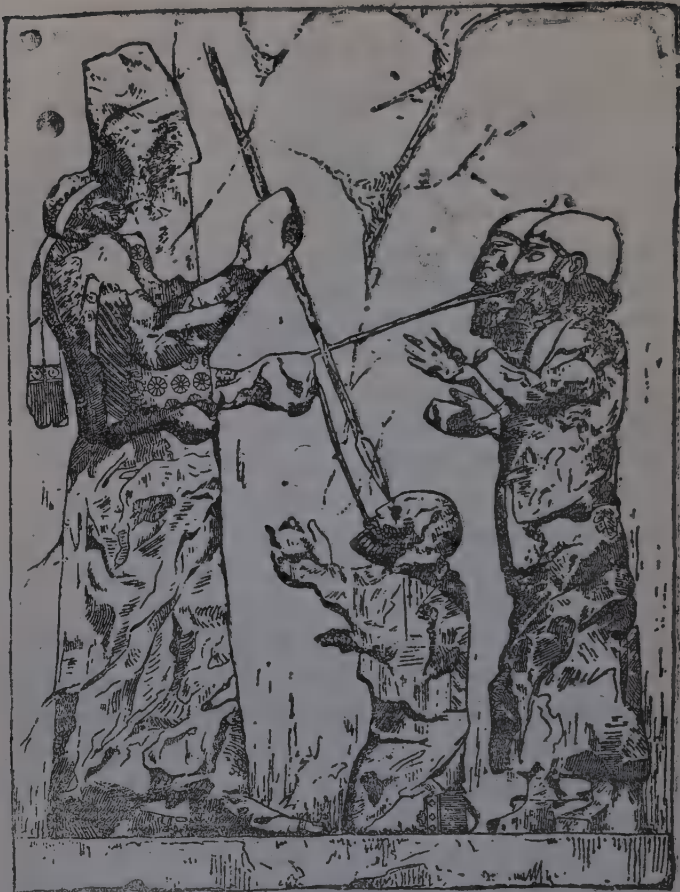
well-planned and secret had been the flight of the king that he had reached the plains of Jericho and was within sight of the Jordan when the Chaldean army overtook and captured him. "And the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled by night by the way of the gate between two walls, which is by the king's garden: (now the Chaldees were against the city round about:) and the king went the way toward the plain. And the army of the Chaldees pursued after the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho: and all his army were scattered from him. So they took the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon to Riblah; and they gave judgment upon him. And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon" (2 Kings xxv. 4-7).

All these details find their parallels in the annals of those eastern conquerors and tyrants. Assurbanipal, for instance, says: "In Hukkurunah the rugged mountain, the servants of Abiyateh son of Tehari, by command of Assur and Ishtar my lords, in the midst of battle I captured alive, I captured in hand. Hand and foot in bonds of iron I placed them. . . . Vaiteh and the Arabians . . . fled and got away. . . . Vaiteh heard of, and over these things feared, and from Nabatæa I brought him out. . . . By command of Assur and Beltis with a mace which was grasped by my hand, the flesh coming out of him, his son, in the sight of his eyes I struck down." Here the capturing of an escaped

The Fall of Jerusalem.

foe is followed by this very putting in bonds, and by the slaughter of a king's hope, the son or sons who should have reigned after him. To these ruthless men, this rending of an enemy's heart emphasised their victory, and was the sweet reward of endurance and toil. The putting out of Zedekiah's eyes by the king's own hands has also its parallels in the inscriptions. The reader will find on next page an illustration of this taken from the walls of an Assyrian palace. The unfortunate prince is on his knees before the king, his hands being raised in a vain entreaty for mercy. That feature in the scene is too good to be missed in this picture of perfect triumph, and so the sculptor has taken care to seize the moment when the wretchedness of the conquered is at its deepest. Behind stand two captured officials, or it may be princes who have been confederate with the victim. Their lips have been pierced with rings to which cords are attached. The cords are grasped by the king's left hand. A similar ring has been passed through the lip of him who kneels; and the cord, which the king also holds in his left hand, is pulled so that his face is lifted up to receive in the eye the sharp point of the spear which the king holds in his right hand. As he gives the fearful stroke, the king keeps his eyes upon the victims whose turn is so soon to come, and he seems to feast upon their evident anguish.

The student of the Scriptures knows that two ways of spelling this great king's name are followed in the Bible. In 2 Kings, Chronicles, and Ezra it is



A CAPTIVE PRINCE BEING BLINDED BY AN ASSYRIAN KING.
PRISONERS BOUND HAND AND FOOT (from the Monuments).

spelled as all but Assyriologists now write it—Nebuchadnezzar; but in Jeremiah and Ezekiel it is spelled Nebuchadrezzar. This latter spelling corresponds with that on all the monuments yet found which contain the king's name. Now, this difference raises the inquiry why the name should be spelled differently. The question has so far been answered only in the usual regrettable fashion. The monuments which we at present know, we are told, decide the matter. Nebuchadrezzar is the *only* correct spelling. How then, we ask, did it happen that the *r* was exchanged for *n* in Kings, Chronicles, and Ezra? Professor Sayce says: "The substitution of *n* for *r* can be explained only as the error of a copyist."* It is not one instance, however, of this variation with which we have to do. This might possibly be explained as a copyist's blunder, although that kind of solution of a difficulty is often as unfounded as it is easy. But it cannot possibly explain why the name is spelled without the slightest variation Nebuchadnezzar in certain Books, and quite as steadfastly Nebuchadrezzar in others. Copyists do not blunder in that fashion. It is possible that the king's name may have been changed. Nebuchadnezzar may have been the earlier form, and Nebuchadrezzar the later. Or there may be some other reason, the discovery of which will prove, when it occurs, to be one of the literary surprises of the day. Meanwhile, the consistency with which each of these forms appear in the Books named indicates

* *The Higher Criticism versus the Monuments*, p. 453.

the probability that some such discovery lies in front of us.

It might be supposed, of course, that 2 Kings was less reliable than Jeremiah and Ezekiel—that these prophets were contemporaries of Nebuchadnezzar, and, therefore, made no mistake, while 2 Kings was written so long after his time that the true spelling of the name had been forgotten. How utterly shallow such “explanations” are becomes evident when we reflect that the supposed later writer would have then had these two prophetic books before him; and that he, therefore, could not have been ignorant of the spelling of the name followed there. But the supposed late origin of 2 Kings and its equally imaginary legendary character are utterly irreconcilable with the absolutely exact character of the information which it has handed down to us. I add one more instance of this in closing our comments upon this Book of 2 Kings. This is found in its last words: “And it came to pass in the seven and thirtieth year of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, that Evil-Merodach king of Babylon in the year that he began to reign did lift up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah out of prison; and he spake kindly to him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon; and changed his prison garments: and he did eat bread continually before him all the days of his life. And his allowance was a continual allowance given him of the king, a daily rate for every day, all the days of his life” (2 Kings xxv. 27-30).

That ending is thoroughly in keeping with the Divine mission of the Book. For it teaches the judged and dispersed Israelites how to read their past history. It shows them their national perversity, and why this fearful judgment has fallen upon them. It was needful that the sad survey should close with a word of consolation and hope; for why is Israel taught to read the past rightly if the future contains no hope? And so here, in the uplifting of Jeconiah and the comforts and the honour of his last days, the future of Israel in its long waiting is shown in figure. It is given over to man's mastery; for "the times of the Gentiles" have begun. But the supremacy can and will lose its bitterness when the chastened spirit bows under the rod. But I deal now with a smaller, but still most important, matter. We have here a most careful reckoning—I should rather say two reckonings. The event happened in the thirty-seventh year of Jehoiachin's captivity; and that, we are told, was also the first year of the reign of Evil-Merodach. Now we know from the information handed down to us that this monarch ascended the Babylonian throne in the year 562 B.C. That, then, is the first year of Evil-Merodach.

Before we turn to the despised "Bible-chronology" let us carefully mark the Bible statement. It will be observed that it gives not only the year, but also the month, and the very day of the month. The event happened "in the seven and thirtieth year," "in the twelfth month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month." In other words, the thirty-seven years

lacked three days only of being completed. In dealing, then, with this thirty-seventh year we are dealing, not with thirty-six years and a fraction, but with practically thirty-seven entire years. Bearing this in mind, let us now turn to the chronology of the Bible. According to it, Jeconiah was carried away into captivity in 599 B.C.

Deducting from this the 37

years mentioned, we have 562 B.C. as the date of this event—the exact year of Evil-Merodach's accession to the throne of Babylon. Figures are sometimes more eloquent than words; and this may well be quoted as an instance.

THE BOOKS OF CHRONICLES.

CHAPTER I.

THE BOOKS OF CHRONICLES AND THEIR NUMBERS.

PROFESSOR SAYCE, in his *Higher Criticism versus the Monuments*—a book which first indicated his departure from the critical school with which till that time he had been closely associated, says: “Whether we are ‘higher critics’ or not, we cannot fail to be struck by the ecclesiastical tone of the Books of the Chronicles. From the beginning of the Books to their end, a single object is kept steadily in view; and that object is the growth and consummation of the Israelitish theocracy. We have only to compare the Books of Kings with the Books of the Chronicles to see how wide is the difference between them. In the one, it is the history of Israel and Judah in the royal period that is set before us; in the other, it is rather the history of the temple and the temple services. The history of the northern kingdom, whose seats of worship were elsewhere than at Jerusalem, is put aside as valueless, and the history of Judah alone is given in detail. But even here the Chronicler dwells rather on the liturgical observances of the Jewish kings than upon their secular policy, and the civil history of Judah is made use of to point the moral that observance of the Levitical laws brought with it prosperity; while disaster followed upon their neglect.” *

I hope to deal with these, as with the other Books of the Old Testament, in a subsequent work, in which the plan and purpose of each Book will be pointed out. Meanwhile, let this testimony to the uniqueness and unity of these Books of Chronicles be marked. They are not mere repetitions of information supplied by pre-existing Books; nor are they made up of odds and ends left by former writers. Israel's story is told afresh with clear, distinct intention. That intention is as evident in the silence of the Books as in their speech. The story of the ten tribes is left out, and Judah alone is dealt with. In the light of the evident purpose of *Chronicles*, the reason is plain. Judah alone preserved the Divine ordinances. And for the returned Israelites was not this—name it “ecclesiastical tone,” or whatever one may choose to call it—the one thing that the replanted people had to keep constantly before them? *Israel, unlike the other nations, has no destiny apart from God's service.* This has been proved by these more than eighteen centuries of what may be named national existence, but cannot be called national life. It will be more gloriously shown in the coming day of Israel's renewed consecration. But there is enough even now to teach the higher criticism, and also a modified rationalism, that *Chronicles* saw clearly, what is now becoming apparent as a historical phenomenon, that Israel has not existed, and cannot exist, for itself. It is the Divinely-appointed Priest of the nations. When it recognised its mission, it impressed and led the nations. When it neglected it, it sank into insigni-

ficance. When it renounced it, Israel was bereft of fatherland and of spiritual perception and power. It wanders among the nations to-day in its blindness disinherited, disrobed, and yet with ineffaceable marks of its priestly destiny. The Book which proclaimed that destiny to restored Israel four-and-twenty centuries ago, not only read to them the one lesson of their past; it also read to the Israelites the story of their future. This one fact is quite enough to show the Book to be prophetic: it stamps it as Divine.

It has been wildly assailed by Rationalism from the first. De Wette and Gramberg refused to give the writer of it credit even for honesty. He was said to have invented the genealogies, the titles of the Books to which he referred, and everything in the history which could not be found in the earlier Books of the Bible. This attack has been fiercely repeated by Wellhausen. He devotes sixty pages of his *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels* to demolish the Books of Chronicles. Narratives are set down as "frightful examples" of the imagination of the Jews. And he makes no secret of what lies behind this assault. If the *Chronicles* are history, then it is clear that Israel possessed the Pentateuch in its present form at the very beginning of its national career; and, consequently, if the higher criticism is to stand, the claims of the Books of Chronicles upon our acceptance and belief must be swept to the winds.

We shall immediately see how fully recent investigation has repelled those unfounded charges. Meanwhile, we may notice another hurtful impression

which is much more widespread, and which betrays haste that is equally lamentable. This is the notion that we must tread very lightly over the numbers of *Chronicles*. They are said, and are largely believed, to be "hopelessly exaggerated." One statement is, that the Chronicler has taken the numbers in Kings and simply multiplied them by ten! That could not have been said by anyone who had even once compared the numbers. We find the objection put more generally, as in the following passage from the pen of a writer to whom we are greatly indebted, but from whom in this matter we dissent not the less strongly. "The Chronicler," writes Professor Sayce, "displays that partiality for large numbers which is still characteristic of the Oriental."* Now, if the charge could be substantiated even in this form, these Books would no longer be Scripture, nor could they be received even as historical.

But let us look into the Books and see what they contain. The reader will remember that Joab was sent by David to number Israel. The general protested; but the king was not to be turned aside, and the enumeration was made. In 2 Samuel xxiv. 9, we find the results given as follow:—

The valiant men of Israel that drew				
the sword were	...	...	...	800,000
"And the men of Judah"	...	...	...	500,000

In all ... 1,300,000.

Now, if there was any truth in the statement that

* *The Higher Criticism versus the Monuments*, p. 463.

the Chronicler multiplied the numbers which he found in the earlier Books by ten, we could easily say what this census should amount to if the event were also recorded by him. The thirteen hundred thousand would at once become thirteen millions. But, fortunately, this event is also narrated in these later Books. Turning to 1 Chronicles xxi. 5, 6, we read: "And Joab gave the sum of the number of the people unto David. And all they of Israel were a thousand thousand and a hundred thousand that drew sword: and Judah was four hundred threescore and ten thousand men that drew sword. But Levi and Benjamin counted he not among them: for the king's word was abominable to Joab." Writing these numbers in figures, we have the men of

Israel	...	...	...	...	...	1,100,000
The men of Judah	...	...	...	...	...	470,000

In all ... 1,570,000.

Now the total number is here undoubtedly higher in Chronicles; but it will be observed that the number assigned to Judah is less by 30,000; so that the alleged Oriental exaggeration is not at all apparent there. Is it possible, however, to explain this divergence, and to show that the numbers are in substantial agreement? This lower sum for the men of Judah seems to suggest a reply; for it appears to indicate that there is some compact body of men, enumerated separately, and added as a whole to Israel. Now, was there any such body as this? If there was a standing army, for example, it might be

omitted in the return as given in Samuel; and might, on the other hand, be included in the return as given in Chronicles. Let us look, then, once more at the figures, and mark how they fall in with this suggestion. The number of men fit for arms in Israel,

According to Chronicles, is ... 1,100,000

And according to Samuel, is ... 800,000

The difference being 300,000

This would, in that case, be the entire number of the standing army; and the 30,000 lacking to Judah in Chronicles would be Judah's contribution to it. This would entirely explain the difference of 270,000 men between the two enumerations.

But is there any foundation for this suggestion? Was there any standing army; and one, too, of such huge dimensions as these? Our questions find their answer in this very Book of 1 Chronicles, which includes the army. In 1 Chronicles xxvii., we read that, in David's elaborate organisation, his army had its place. "Now the children of Israel after their number, to wit, the chief fathers and captains of thousands and hundreds, and their officers that served the king in any matter of the courses, who came in and went out month by month throughout all the months of the year, of every course were twenty and four thousand" (verse 1). Then follows an enumeration of each of the twelve twenty-four thousands and their commanders (verses 2-15). Each tribe seems to have supplied 2,000 men per month; 24,000 being the whole of the host on active duty in any

one month; but the lists were, no doubt, made up for the year, so that each man would know when he was to appear, and to do his month's service. Summing up, then, these twelve contingents of 24,000 men, we get in all	...	...	...	...	288,000
If to these we add special officers...				...	12,000

We reach, as the total of the army ... 300,000, the number added by the Chronicler to the return for Israel. And when we question that 30,000 deducted from the men of Judah, and placed here in the total added to Israel, we come upon an indication of David's wisdom. Twenty-four thousand was the number which Judah had to contribute to this trained police force, or army. But it will be noted that the number was 30,000, and not 24,000, and it is probable that the 6,000 here added *were officers*, so that the precaution was apparently taken to have one-half of these specially-appointed officers of the army taken from the king's own tribe—that of Judah.

De Wette has a note on this passage which is sadly characteristic of critical tactics. "Numbers," he says, "are enlarged; in 1 Chronicles xxi. 5, we have 1,100,000, instead of 800,000, in 2 Sam. xxiv. 9."* But perfect truthfulness—and science is always rigidly truthful—would also have said: "Numbers are diminished, too; for in 1 Chronicles xxi. 5, we have 470,000, instead of 500,000 in 2 Sam. xxiv. 9." But it did not suit De Wette to lay this last fact before his readers, and so he confines himself to the other; and

* *Einleitung*, § 190, b.

yet we are told that this attack upon the veracity of the Bible is both scientific and devout!

Our time and attention will not have been thrown away if this has shown us that the Books of Chronicles have the facts as fully in view as the earlier Books of Samuel and Kings. If God is the author of the one and of the other, there could of course be no difference in respect to that; and this seeming discrepancy shows, as other incidents about to be brought before us will also prove abundantly, that there is absolutely no difference whatever in regard to fulness and accuracy of information in an earlier Book as compared with a later. It may be added also, that it is to *Chronicles* we should have looked for the recording of the larger numbers. For it is its special mission to make us see how God's blessing rests upon obedience. The Law had proclaimed that it should be so when Israel's history, as a nation, began. And now *Chronicles*, recounting to Israel the story of her past, proves that it has been so. Consequently, the entire military strength of the people in those days when God was known and served by them, is here set forth. None of the army lists are here left out because the reckoning of *them* was a matter of course, and was not included in the specific work assigned to Joab. These might very well be omitted in *Samuel*, whose special purpose was not concerned with them; but they could not be omitted here in the picture of the greatness given to Israel in the days of her fidelity. It will be observed also that *Chronicles* intimates that even in those

larger numbers the whole of Israel's strength is not stated; for it is careful to inform us that two tribes were omitted in the reckoning. "But Levi and Benjamin counted he not among them; for the king's word was abominable to Joab" (1 Chron. xxi. 6).

CHAPTER II.

AZARIAH OF JUDAH.

THE comparatively recent discovery of the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser has signally proved the reliability of the Books of Chronicles. In 2 Kings xv. we find a very brief account of Azariah, or Uzziah, king of Judah. There is only one event, indeed, that is mentioned, and that is Azariah's being struck with leprosy. In regard to this even, we are not told in what circumstances, nor for what reason, the judgment was inflicted. It apparently did not enter into the plan of *Kings* to tell us these things. But when we open the Chronicles, we discover that Uzziah was one of the greatest of the descendants of David. His long reign of fifty-two years displayed a statesmanship and a military career seldom, if ever, equalled by his successors. "He sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God: and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper. And he went forth and warred against the Philistines, and brake down the wall of Gath, and the wall of Jabneh, and the wall of Ashdod, and he built cities

about Ashdod, and among the Philistines. And God helped him against the Philistines, and against the Arabians that dwelt in Gur-baal, and the Mehunims. And the Ammonites gave gifts to Uzziah: and his name spread abroad even to the entering in of Egypt; for he strengthened himself exceedingly" (2 Chronicles xxvi. 5-8).

We are then told that, besides strengthening the fortifications of Jerusalem, "he built towers in the desert, and digged many wells: for he had much cattle, both in the low country, and in the plains: husbandmen also, and vinedressers in the mountains, and in Carmel: for he loved husbandry" (verses 9, 10). His army, too, was large and well organised. "Moreover Uzziah had a host of fighting men, that went out to war by bands, according to the number of their account by the hands of Jeiel the scribe and Maaseiah the ruler, under the hand of Hananiah, one of the king's captains. The whole number of the chief of the fathers of the mighty men of valour were 2,600. And under their hand was an army, 307,500, that made war with mighty power, to help the king against the enemy. And Uzziah prepared for them throughout all the host shields, and spears, and helmets, and habergeons, and bows, and slings to cast stones. And he made in Jerusalem engines, invented by cunning men, to be on the towers and upon the bulwarks, to shoot arrows and great stones withal. And his name spread far abroad; for he was marvellously helped, till he was strong" (verses 11-15).

Such is the picture presented in 2 Chronicles. But

if this revival of Jewish greatness was a fact, we should find some indication of it in the recovered records of the time. We have already seen that in this very period Tiglath-pileser* was subjugating the nations of the west, and that he mentions Azariah of Judah. These inscriptions are in a mutilated condition, the slabs on which they are having been torn down by Esarhaddon, and used by him in the construction of a palace of his own. The greatest care is consequently required in their perusal, and it is perhaps hardly to be wondered at that mistakes have been made. Mr. Robertson, for example, in his interesting and valuable little book, *Voices of the Past*, says, in reference to one inscription: "From it we learn that King Azariah was among those whom Tiglath-pileser laid under tribute."† He has been misled as to this. There is an "Urijaikki" mentioned among the payers of tribute. This name is given in another place as "Urikki," and is quite different from Azariah. Besides, as Schrader has shown,‡ this is Urikki of Kui, and not of Judah. It is true that on a previous page Schrader, by piecing together the readings of several fragments, believes that he can read that Tiglath-pileser claims to have received the tribute of Azariah of Judah. This reading has not been maintained. The latest authoritative decision is that of Dr. Pinches, who has kindly sent me a proof copy of his forthcoming work, *The Old Testament in the Light of the Historical Records and Legends of Assyria and Babylonia*. He says, of these "earlier references,"

* See page 37. † Page 184. ‡ Vol. I., p. 242.

that they "are so very fragmentary that nothing certain can be said concerning their connection." * The conclusion which he draws from all the references is as follows: "It would almost seem that Azariah of Judah took part in the attempt to get rid of Assyrian influence; and though this was fully recognised by Tiglath-pileser, the Assyrian king, to all appearance, did not come into direct contact with his country." † There is no record whatever of any invasion of Judah, or of any tribute received from that land, though Menahem of Samaria, Azariah's contemporary, is plainly mentioned as a tributary.

And the following fact not only excludes the possibility of the subjection of Judah at this time, but also shows us that Tiglath-pileser saw in Judah the very power which is so vividly pictured in Chronicles. "Whatever may have taken place in Judah," says Dr. Pinches, "Azariah's sympathisers did not get on so well as their leader. No less than nineteen places were captured by the Assyrian king, including 'Usnu, Siannu, Simirra, Raspuna on the sea-coast, together with the cities of the Sauê-mountains (mountains which are in Lebanon), Ba'ali-sapuna (Baal-Zephon), as far as Amanu, the mountain of *urkarinu* wood, the whole of the land of Sau, the province of Kar-Addi (fortress of Hadad), the city of Hatarikka, the province of Nuqudina, Hasu with the cities which are around it, the cities of Arâ, and the cities which are on each side of it, with the cities which are around them, the mountain Sarbûa to its whole extent, the city Ashanu,

* Page 348.

† Page 348.

the city Yadabu, the mountain Yaraqu to its whole extent, the city . . . ri, the city Elli-tarbi, the city Zitānu as far as the city Atinnu, the city . . . (and) the city Bumamu—XIX districts of the city of Hamath, with the cities which were around them, of the sea-coast of the setting of the sun, which in sin and wickedness had taken to Azriau (Azariah), I added to the boundary of Assyria. I set my commander-in-chief as governor over them, 30,300 people I removed from the midst of their cities, and caused the province of the city of Ku . . . to take them.” *

Here we have a wide, populous, and important territory in the far north of Palestine so thoroughly in touch with Azariah of Judah that their resistance is set down by the Assyrian king to an agreement with him. They are incited to revolt or resistance by this distant Judæan monarch. He has somehow managed to weld together cities and districts usually separated by long-enduring antipathies and conflicting interests, until the whole is under his control, and answers to his touch. Is it possible to imagine a more ample admission of the faithfulness of this account in Chronicles of Azariah's greatness? We have also to note that Tiglath-pileser does not in these years come down into Azariah's neighbourhood. To explain all that, we require the very account which I have quoted in the beginning of this chapter—an account which tells us that Azariah has subjected Philistia on the west, that Ammon on the east is tributary to him, and that he possesses in reality that very army, and those

* Pages 348, 349.

very captains, whose huge numbers "scholars" had rejected as "exaggerations," "fictions," and "falsehoods."

Referring to this, which he describes as "that important passage . . . respecting the alliance with Azariah (Uzziah of Juda) with Hamath," Schrader says: "From this we learn that, while Tiglath-pileser chastised Hamath for its alliance with Juda, he did not see fit to molest the latter as well, a clear proof of the accuracy of the Biblical account of the firmly-established power of Uzziah."* But this "Biblical account" is furnished solely by the Books of Chronicles. Neither in 2 Kings, nor in Isaiah, is there any description of, or, indeed, any reference to, the mighty military power and the far-reaching influence of him who, we now know, was the most mighty of the kings of Judah. This fact, even if it stood alone, is enough to show how unfounded the present attack upon the character of these Books is. Schrader's comment upon the omission of Azariah's name from the tribute list is equally strong. "As to the omission of the king of Juda from the list," he says, "this agrees with what we can infer from the inscription itself about the position occupied by Azariah - Uzziah, and have explained above. Azariah-Uzziah felt himself strong enough to resist an attack from Assyria if the necessity arose. In this he was evidently reckoning on the support of the peoples and kings living round Juda, and which are likewise omitted from this list, namely, those of the Philistine cities, Ashdod, Gaza, and

* Vol. i., p. 243.

Ashkelon, as well as of Edom, Moab, Ammon," &c. * A power which could hope to resist successfully the armies of Assyria, even with the aid of these neighbouring peoples, must have been mighty indeed. The political situation implies the existence of those very 2,600 captains and 307,500 men.

Professor Sayce, in that book published as he was abandoning the critical camp, and in which he retains here and there his former attitude, makes a distinct admission in regard to the words of Scripture with which we are now dealing. He says: "We may . . . consider the notices by the Chronicler of nations whose names are not mentioned in the Books of Kings as worthy of full credit. Even the 'Mehunims,' of whom Uzziah is said to have been the conqueror, have had light cast upon them by Oriental archæology. Professor Hommel and Dr. Glaser see in them the Minæans of Southern Arabia, whose power extended at one time as far north at Gaza, and who have left memorials of themselves in the neighbourhood of Teima, the Tema of the Old Testament. The 'Mehunims,' or 'Maonites,' are referred to in another passage of the Chronicles (I Chronicles iv. 41), as well as in the Book of Judges (x. 12). As the power of the Minæans waned before that of Saba, or Sheba, any notice of their presence on the borders of Palestine must go back to a considerable antiquity. If, therefore, their identification with the Mehunim of the Chronicler is correct, the reference to them bears the stamp of contemporaneous authority."†

* Vol. ii., p. 245. † *The Higher Criticism versus the Monuments*, p. 468.

CHAPTER III.

HEZEKIAH'S LABOURS.

WE are told in 2 Chronicles xxxii. 2-5, that "When Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib was come, and that he was purposed to fight against Jerusalem, he took counsel with his princes and his mighty men to stop the waters of the fountains which were without the city: and they did help him. So there was gathered much people together, who stopped (or hid) all the fountains, and the brook that ran through the midst of the land, saying, Why should the kings of Assyria come, and find much water? Also he strengthened himself, and built up all the wall that was broken, and raised it up to the towers, and another wall without, and repaired Millo in the city of David, and made darts and shields in abundance." In the close of the chapter we find another reference to the work done probably at this time: "This same Hezekiah also stopped (or hid) the upper watercourse of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David"(ver. 30).

The account of these preparations for the threatened siege we owe to this Book alone. We have references, it is true, both in 2 Kings and in Isaiah, to this timely and strenuous activity. In concluding the notice of Hezekiah's reign, the former says: "And the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and all his might, and how he

made a pool, and a conduit, and brought water into the city, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?" (2 Kings xx. 20). In Isaiah, so graphic is the prophetic description, that we grasp the king's plan, and seem to see the crowds of the busy toilers at their work. "Thou didst look in that day to the armour of the house of the forest. Ye have seen also the breaches of the city of David, that they are many: and ye gathered together the waters of the lower pool. And ye have numbered the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses ye have broken down to fortify the wall. Ye made also a ditch between the two walls for the water of the old pool: but ye have not looked unto the Maker thereof, neither had respect unto Him that fashioned it long ago. And in that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth: and behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine: let us eat and drink; for to morrow we shall die" (xxii. 8-13).

These last words show us the offence of that time of busy preparation. The gathering of multitudes of helpers, and the abundant preparation made to supply them with food and drink was apparently to the frivolous crowds merely a time of highest gaiety and riot. The light jest went round that, as no one knew how long such bountiful provision might last, they should enjoy the abundance while it was to be had. And few there were who thought of Him whose hand was beginning to fall upon Judah. But, graphic

as these glimpses are, we should not have known the story to which they point were it not for the account in **2** Chronicles. It is here alone that Hezekiah's preparation are described. According to all truly critical rules this should, therefore, be described as unhistorical. But Wellhausen's attack upon this Book is one of so ferocious a kind that all real criticism is swept to the winds. He says in one place: "One might as well try to hear the grass growing as attempt to derive from such a source as this a historical knowledge of the conditions of ancient Israel;" and in another: "About trifles, which produce an appearance of accuracy, the author is never in any embarrassment." And again: "It 's thus apparent how inventions of the most circumstantial kind have arisen out of this plan of writing history, as it is euphemistically called."* Upon the atrociousness of these accusations, I need not dwell. Providentially, we have here another instance in which the critical case against these Books can be tested. For here the Chronicler supplies us with special information. He gives us minute particulars. The account is once more "of the most circumstantial kind." Is this, then, a tissue of inventions, as Wellhausen and his friends would have us believe, or is it actual history for which they should be as devoutly thankful as ourselves?

Let us take, first of all, the notice in verse 30, which tells us that Hezekiah "also stopped the upper watercourse of Gihon, and brought it straight down

* *Prolegomena*

to the west side of the city of David." Research in the Holy Land, and specially at Jerusalem, has shed a flood of light on this, and on many like references. Mr. King, the author of *Recent Discoveries on the Temple Hill*, describes his first sight of Solomon's Pools, those ancient reservoirs for the water supply of Jerusalem. "On passing Rachel's tomb on the Bethlehem road," he says in his modest and interesting narrative, "he left the main route, and followed on the right side the path that leads into the mountainous district. The hill-tops were bleak and bare, and seemed to be composed entirely of grey rock; but the valleys often smiled with ripening corn, and blooming wild flowers in many places carpeted the limestone slopes. Numerous flocks of goats supply the natives with milk, and the joyous humming of bees among the wild flowers recalled that primitive description of Canaan which speaks of it as "a land flowing with milk and honey." On reaching the summit of the mountain flank, a plateau was crossed, and presently there came in sight an extensive battlemented castle. This is a Saracenic building, probably erected in Crusading times, designed both as a defence against the enemy and a hospitable khan for native wanderers. It is now kept by a solitary Arab, who spends most of his time in attending to numerous hives of bees. Riding along under the cool shade of the west wall, and turning the corner, a gladdening sight burst upon the view, for in the valley were seen three large open cisterns, known as Solomon's Pools. They were brimful of living water,

and, reflecting as they did the blue of a cloudless sky, formed a pleasing contrast to the stony hill-tops of this thirsty land." *

These pools are on an average 400 feet long and 250 feet broad, and are from twenty to thirty feet deep. Their united surface, therefore, is about seven acres, and they are capable of holding an immense supply of water. "About 200 yards north-west of the Upper Pool, standing in an open field, is a small building that covers the entrance to a spring called the Sealed Fountain. From this spring the Pools derive their chief supply, and it is well worthy of a visit. The circular opening, resembling the mouth of a well, is usually covered with a large flat stone. Twenty-five steps cut in this rock lead down to a vaulted chamber 45 feet long by 25 feet wide. Adjoining this is a smaller chamber, and both are covered with ancient stone arches. The water at four points, issues from the sides of the hill, and by means of small ducts is collected in a basin; thence it is carried along a vaulted passage towards the Pools." †

But the Sealed Fountain played a still more important part in the ancient water-supply of the Holy City. It stands at a level of more than 200 feet higher than that of the ancient Temple, and was, therefore, able to supply every part of the sacred city. This seems to have been well understood by the engineers of those ancient times. "It has now been ascertained," writes Mr. King, "that in the subterranean vault the stream from the Sealed

* Pages 141, 142.

† Pages 142, 143.

Fountain is joined by another stream of water flowing from the south, and deriving its supply from a valley on the Hebron road, called Wady Arrûb, a place about six miles south of Solomon's Pools. The water of this latter stream is collected chiefly from the rocks in the valley of Wady Arrûb, and conducted through a rock-bored tunnel four miles long, which passes beneath the bed of another valley called Wady Byar, and thence on toward the Sealed Fountain. At the junction above indicated, the aqueduct tapped all the water from the Sealed Fountain, except a scanty overflow conveyed through a square duct into the Upper Pool."

Solomon's Pools were evidently not the destination of the water of the Sealed Fountain. The Pools were only intended to receive and preserve the overflow. "As the valley of the Urtâs descends somewhat abruptly toward the east," Mr. King continues, "the constructors of the Pools doubtless perceived that it was not possible to make one large reservoir of sufficient size without also making an embankment of colossal dimensions, extending right across the valley. They, therefore, prudently made three pools, at a distance of 150 feet from each other, each pool being twenty feet below the level of the one above it. As they occupy the bed of the valley, which zigzags considerably at this part, the pools themselves do not lie in a straight line. The conduits connecting them were so arranged that the lowest pool was first filled with water, then the other two in succession, and the discharge was effected in the same order, each pool

when empty being re-filled by the one above it.”* Another aqueduct ran from the lower pool, and supplied Bethlehem. It then, passing onward to Jerusalem, went round the west and south of the city, and poured its waters into the Temple cisterns. What then, was done with the chief supply? Mr. King continues: “This aqueduct, known as the High Level, though by the Arabs called the Aqueduct of Unbelievers, is one of the most remarkable works of ancient Palestine.”

Speaking of the great aqueduct to which we have referred as coming from the south, Mr. King says: “With the increased waters of the Sealed Fountain, the High Level passes along the northern side of Wady Urtâs, near the summit of the valley side, then cutting through the water parting, it follows the western slope of the hill, leaving Bethlehem on the east. It then descends into the valley by Rachel’s Tomb, and, instead of passing along a causeway, as it probably would have done had it been constructed by the Romans, the water flows through an inverted stone syphon, and forces its way up the slope on the northern side of the valley. This syphon is constructed of perforated stone blocks set in a mass of rubble work. The blocks are firmly united by the fine jointing of the stone and the use of an extremely hard cement. The syphon was first noticed by Mr. MacNeill, who examined the course of the aqueduct for the Syrian Waterworks Committee; and it clearly indicates not only considerable skill as a piece of

* Pages 147, 148.

masonry, but it shows also that the makers possessed some knowledge of hydrostatics—a knowledge either forgotten by, or not known to, the Romans for many generations. The immense arched structures in the neighbourhood of Rome, built for conducting water across valleys and depressions, indicate that the builders of these colossal bridges were ignorant of the hydrostatic principle that water flowing through a tube can be made to rise to the level of its source.”

Whither, then, did this wonderful aqueduct bear the precious stream? What centre of population did the ancient constructors intend to supply. “Captain Wilson, in 1865, traced the High Level Aqueduct from its source in Wady Arrûb to a point north of Rachel’s Tomb; and Captain Warren, continuing the research, found further traces of it in the plain of Rephaim, on the east side of the present road leading to Jerusalem. An ancient tank and part of an aqueduct have lately been found in the Russian ground, near the north-west corner of the city wall, and Captain Warren is of opinion that these remains formed part of the High Level. If this be so, this aqueduct in olden times supplied the Pool of Upper Gihon, now called Birket Mamilla, and thence following the channel still existing at this part, entered the Holy City at the Jaffa Gate. Having furnished a supply to the citadel, it would flow on to the Pool of Hezekiah, now called Birket Hammam, and thence along the whole course of the Tyropœon valley, till it joined the waters of the Pool of Siloam.” *

There cannot be any doubt that the conclusion indicated above is the right one. The High Level Aqueduct plainly led towards Jerusalem; and the remains found in the Russian possession point with equal plainness to the Birket Mamilla as the reservoir which received the far-fetched treasure. The Birket Mamilla was doubtless "the upper watercourse of Gihon." Gihon means "spring," or source of water-supply. To-day the Upper Gihon is a "broad flat sweep of a shallow pool" in the midst of an extensive Mohammedan cemetery. "It is from this that the water found in Hezekiah's Pool in the city flows after the rains, through a small aqueduct which is open at different points." * That aqueduct is "straight." It goes "to the west side of the city of David," and it is no doubt the work of Hezekiah to which reference is made in 2 Chronicles xxxii. 30. It is unfortunate for the critics that discoveries "of the most circumstantial kind" are constantly occurring in this way to prove that what they have dared to call "inventions" are veritable history; and the so-called "trifles which produce an appearance of accuracy" are simply marvellously selected incidents which make the men and events of these ancient times still live before us.

But a much greater work was done upon the east, that is, the opposite, side of the city. There was found here a specially large water supply, which was open, and "flowing through the land." Hezekiah resolved to defend his capital, and his first step was to secure the co-operation of the leaders of the people. He

* Cunningham Geikie, *The Holy Land and the Bible*, vol. ii., p. 28.

gathered them together, and laid his plans before them. "So there was gathered much people together, who stopped all the fountains and the brook that ran through the midst of the land." Dr. Thomson, in his visits to Jerusalem, saw nothing of this brook in the Kedron valley, and accounts for this by the changes which have come upon the place, and the rubbish with which the valley is filled. But his visits were apparently so timed as to miss a phenomenon which is still to be witnessed. "The brook," says the Rev. W. F. Birch, who is quoted by Mr. Harper, "has been overflowing every year. Major Conder says* (under head *Bîr Eqûb*): 'The rising of the waters is held as a feast by the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who may be seen walking beside the water, or sitting in the valley in numbers on a bright winter day, when the water is flowing.' After heavy rains, the water from the lower strata of rock finds an outlet up the shaft of the well. Sir Charles Warren discovered one entrance to three staircases, a little north of the well, one of them leading to a semi-natural cistern in the rock, where a natural cleft was also visible. This staircase had evidently been cut into at a later date, but in its original form it had once been built up by a cross-wall, and at the bottom of the wall a hole or duct was left six and three-eighths by four inches, and on the northern side a stone plug to fit, and twelve inches long, was found in it. Why? Here is THE VERY PLUG Hezekiah put in when Sennacherib invaded Judah. Talk of the Bible not bearing historical

* *Memoirs, Jerusalem*, p. 371.

criticism! Afterwards, the *plug* was no longer needed, when the 1,800 feet aqueduct from the cistern was made down the Kidron."

"It seems to me," continues Mr. Birch, "that the above staircases have been made by the Jebusites, and that this source of water is to be identified with En-rogel. . . .

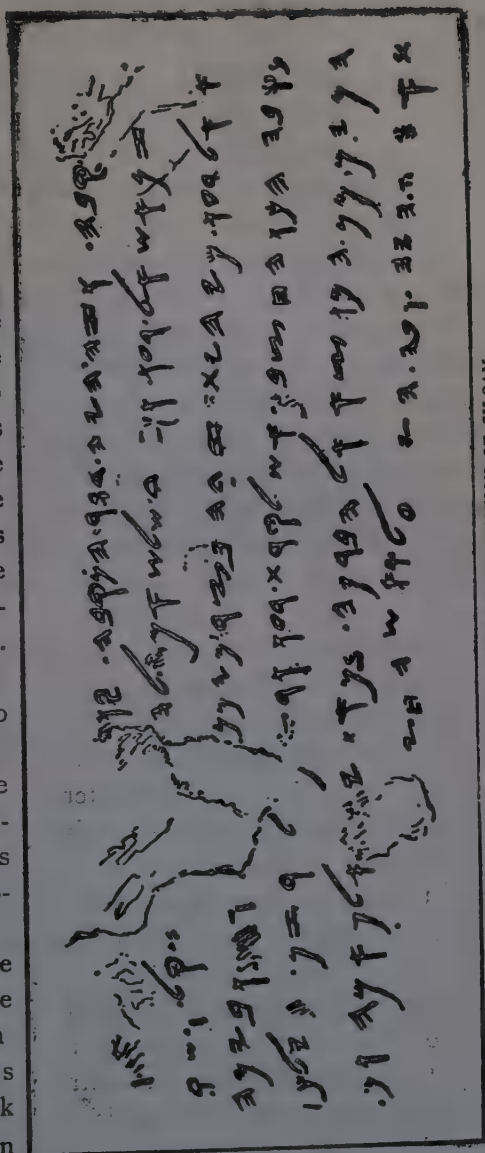
"At an immense expenditure of labour a spacious aqueduct (six feet high, and from three feet six inches to four feet broad) was cut under the western side of the Kidron valley, starting from the grotto, which was practically the source of the waters, and extending at least 1,800 feet down the ravine.

"Now, at last, the brook was stopped. Buried as it was forty or fifty feet out of sight, and beyond hearing, the Assyrians could never have found it." *

A remarkable discovery was made in the Summer of 1880, which carried this confirmation of the record in Chronicles much further. One of the pupils of Dr. Schick a retired architect, who had long resided at Jerusalem, was exploring Hezekiah's aqueduct along with some of his companions. He happened to fall into the water, and when rising saw what seemed to him to be an inscription upon one of the stones. The news was carried to Dr. Schick, who immediately visited the spot. It was plain that the inscription was no delusion. But it was under water, and long centuries had filled up many of the letters with deposits of lime. His copy was merely sufficient to indicate that the inscriptions was in old Phœnician

* *The Bible and Modern Discoveries*, pp. 515-519.

characters. After telling how Dr. Schick's attention was drawn to the matter, Prof. Sayce says: "The first thing to be done was to lower the level of the water, so as to expose the inscription to view. But his efforts to copy the text were not successful. He was not a palæographer: and as the letters of the inscription as well as every crack and flaw in



THE ANCIENT HEBREW INSCRIPTION OF SILOAM.

the stone, had been filled by the water with a deposit of lime, it was impossible for him to distinguish between characters and accidental markings on the rock, or to make out the exact forms of the letters. The first intelligible copy was accordingly made by myself during my visit to Jerusalem in February, 1881. As, however, I had to sit for hours in the mud and water, working by the dim light of a candle, my copy required correction in several points; and it was not till the arrival of Dr. Guthe, six weeks later, that an exact facsimile was obtained. Dr. Guthe removed the deposit of lime by the application of an acid, and so revealed the original appearance of the tablet. A cast of it was taken, and squeezes made from the cast which could be studied at leisure and in a good light.

“The inscription is engraved on the lower part of an artificial tablet cut in the wall of rock about nineteen feet from the place where the subterranean conduit opens out upon the Pool of Siloam, and on the right hand side of one who enters it. The conduit is at first about sixteen feet high; but the height gradually lessens until in one place it is not quite two feet above the floor of the passage. According to Captain Conder’s measurements the tunnel is 1,708 yards in length from the point where it leaves the Spring of the Virgin to the point where it enters the Pool of Siloam. It does not run, however, in a straight line, and towards the centre there are two *culs de sac*, the origin of which is explained by the inscription. We there learn that the workmen at

both ends, like the engineers of the Mont Cénis tunnel, intended to meet in the middle. But they did not succeed in doing so, though the two excavations had approached one another sufficiently near for the workmen in the one to hear the sound of the pickaxes used by the workmen in the other. How such a feat of engineering was possible in the age when the tunnel was excavated it is difficult to understand, more especially when we remember that the channel slopes downward through the rock, and winds very considerably. It may be added that the floor of the conduit has been rounded to allow the water to pass through it more easily."*

The inscription runs thus:—

"(Behold the) excavation! Now this is the history of the excavation. While the excavators were still lifting up the pick, each toward his neighbour, and while there were yet three cubits to (excavate, there was heard) the voice of one man calling to his neighbour, for there was an *excess* (?) in the rock on the right hand (and on the left?). And after that on the day of excavating the excavators had struck pick against pick, one against another, the waters flowed from the spring to the pool for a distance of 1,200 cubits. And (part) of a cubit was the height of the rock over the head of the excavators."†

Was this the excavation executed in hot haste in the days of Hezekiah? There is no date in the

* *Records of the Past* (New Series), pp. 168-170.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 174, 175.

inscription, nor is there any king's name in it. We are reduced to inferences drawn from the forms of the letters, the character of the Hebrew used, and the statements made in 2 Chronicles. Very different opinions have been held as to the date of the inscriptions, some believing it to be older than the time of Hezekiah. Professor Sayce, in the paper from which we have just quoted, intimates his conviction that this is Hezekiah's tunnel. Writing some five years later, he says: "Though there is no indication of date in the text, the age of the inscription can be determined approximately by an appeal to history and palæography. We possess a good many inscribed Jewish and Israelitish seals, characterised partly by proper names compounded with the sacred name of Jahveh, partly by lines drawn across the face of the seal and dividing the lines of writing one from the other. Several of these seals are older than the period of the Exile, and among them is one said to have been found at Jerusalem, which is in the possession of Mr. Clark. The inscription upon it tells us that it once 'belonged to Elishama, the son of the king.' Now we know who this Elishama was. He is referred to in Jeremiah xli. 1 as a Jewish prince of 'the seed royal,' and grandfather of Ishmael, the contemporary of Zedekiah. He would, therefore, have flourished about 650 B.C., and his seal shows us what forms were assumed by the letters of the Jewish alphabet in his day. When we compare these with the forms of the same letters found in the Siloam inscription, it becomes evident that the latter are

somewhat more archaic, and that consequently the inscription which contains them must go back to the end of the eighth century before our era.

“This would bring us to the reign of Hezekiah, and historical reasons have made many scholars believe that the tunnel of Siloam was the work of that king.” Professor Sayce himself is of that opinion. After showing that the forms of “the letters are rounded, rather than angular, and their downward lines are curved at the bottom as they would be in writing with a pen,” he continues: “Before such forms could have been imitated upon stone, they must have been firmly fixed in the usage of the people, and so prove that already before the reign of Hezekiah written manuscripts were plentiful in the Jewish kingdom.”

“What, then, becomes,” he asks, “of the theories of a Vernes or a Havet, which assume that before the Babylonian captivity writing was an art rarely, if ever, practised? On the contrary, an indirect confirmation of a striking character is given by palæography of the claims put forward by the Old Testament Scriptures. These call upon us to believe that books were written and read throughout the royal period of Israelitish history, and that these books were not monuments of stone or metal, but books in the most modern and genuine sense of the word. When it is stated in the Book of Proverbs (xxv. 1) that Hezekiah employed men to copy out the proverbs of Solomon, we are reminded of the libraries of Babylonia and Assyria, where scribes were constantly at work

copying and re-editing the older literature of the country, and the very forms of the letters in the Siloam inscription rise up in evidence that the statement is true. The art of writing books, let us feel assured, was no new thing in Israel, and there was no reason why a manuscript of the age of Solomon should not have been preserved to the age of Hezekiah. We have no reason to doubt that 'the men of Hezekiah' did copy out 'the proverbs of Solomon,' and they were more likely to know whose proverbs they were than the most accomplished critic of to-day."*

That is a typical event in this struggle, which, however long it may last, will have the oft-repeated result—deepened trust in the Bible. The discoveries made here, as those made everywhere besides when they touch upon the Bible, witness for it and against its adversaries. And they show that the Chronicler, even when he walks alone, walks surely.

CHAPTER IV.

MANASSEH'S CAPTIVITY AND RELEASE.

THE Chronicles, dealing so largely, in accordance with their special purpose, with the attacks made upon the Divinely-instituted worship of Israel, and with the reformatations attempted by various kings, offer

* *The Higher Criticism versus the Monuments*, pp. 380-388.

very few additional points of contact with Assyrian and Egyptian history. It might be shown, indeed that various references imply a condition of affairs quite in keeping with what we now know to have been the history of the times; but I limit myself to one more incident, for the knowledge of which we are indebted to this part of Scripture alone.

Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, threw aside the splendid traditions of his father's reign, and outstripped in impious daring the worst of his predecessors. He introduced the hideous and obscene Baal and Venus worships. "He built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the House of the Lord. And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom: also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards. . . . And he set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the House of God" (2 Chronicles xxxiii. 3-7).

Manasseh and the frivolous multitude, who changed their religion according to what happened to be in favour at the Court, were remonstrated with in vain: "The Lord spake to Manasseh and to his people; but they would not hearken" (verse 10). Then God's chastisement fell, and fell in mercy. "Wherefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon. And when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled

himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto Him: and He was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into His kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord He was God" (verses 11-13).

The record of this incident was one which was specially in line with the purpose of these Books, and thus for our knowledge of Manasseh's chastisement and repentance we are indebted to them alone. But this very service secured their condemnation at the hands of the critics. Their "account of Manasseh," writes Dr. Samuel Davidson, "is so unlike that given in the Kings, as to excite the attention of the critic, and to awaken grave doubts of historical fidelity on the part of the former" (the Chronicler). Then follows a determined attack upon the reliability of Chronicles in this matter. He sums up thus: "From a consideration of all the circumstances of the case, we must conclude the alleged reform, and consequently the repentance, of Manasseh to be *unhistorical*. In relation to the captivity of Manasseh in Babylon, some critics who reject the alleged fact of his repentance and reforms, maintain its historical reality; such as Movers, Thenius, and Bertheau. The silence of the writer of Kings respecting this captivity is very unfavourable to the idea of its actual existence. That so important an event is omitted in those books, and was not found of course in the historical work from which he drew his materials, is calculated to shake our faith in its credibility. . . . Besides, it is related that the

king of Assyria took Manasseh to *Babylon*, instead of to his own capital, to the very city which was then disposed to rebel against him. That is improbable. . . . On reviewing all the circumstances of the case, it appears to us that the alleged captivity of Manasseh, as well as his repentance, is unhistorical. The carrying away of Jehoiachin and Zedekiah to Babylon furnished a pattern for the alleged event. It is strange that Thenius and Ewald uphold the credit of the Chronist on this point, though they impugn it so frequently in other places. Movers and Bertheau naturally defend it here. Graf has fully shown the untenableness of both facts."*

This is a specially characteristic passage. The critic knows how the Books of the Bible *should* have been written. If these were facts, Kings *must* have mentioned them! He knows everything also about the writing of the Books. The writers consulted "sources," that is, previously written documents. They consulted these for the one purpose of copying their contents. They copied these contents so completely that an earlier writer like that of Kings left nothing for a late comer such as he who wrote Chronicles. In that case, one wonders why the "sources" were copied at all, and why the ancient books which were preserved so long were not suffered to continue. But all this learned matter is now worth merely the price of waste paper, for its intricate and sustained argument is now seen to be but the vapouring of learned folly.

* *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, vol. ii., pp. 97-100.

For there is no longer doubt anywhere as to the historical character of this part of the sacred history. Here is what one, compelled by the astounding and ever-increasing confirmations of Scripture of recent times to turn his back upon Samuel Davidson and his successors, says: "Doubt has been cast upon the narratives of political events" (in *Chronicles*) "which are supplementary to what we read in the Books of Kings. But there is one case in which Oriental archæology enables us to test the trustworthiness of these supplementary narratives; and in this case, as Professor Schrader has pointed out, the suspicions of the higher criticism have been shown to be unfounded. Manasseh, it is stated by the Chronicler, was carried in chains to Babylon by the king of Assyria, and subsequently allowed to return to his own land. The fact that the Assyrian king carried the Jewish prince to Babylon instead of Nineveh seemed to militate decisively against the truth of the story. The cuneiform inscriptions, however, have set the matter in a new light. We have learned from them that Esar-haddon, the contemporary of Manasseh, was king of Babylonia as well as of Assyria, and that he was also the restorer of Babylon." This kindness to Babylon, however, the Professor goes on to show, had been rewarded by revolt in the next reign; and, after referring to incidents and inscriptions which we shall look at immediately, he concludes: "We can draw a conclusion of some moment from this vindication of the account given us by the *Chronicles* of the captivity of Manasseh.

We have no right to reject as unhistorical a narrative which is found only in the Books of the Chronicles, merely because there are no traces of it in the Books of Kings. On the contrary, as it has been proved that one of these narratives is in strict accordance with historical facts, we may assume that in other instances also we should find the same accordance, if only the monumental evidence were at hand.”*

The reversal of the verdict of the critics could not be more complete. They have not only been proved to be mistaken in this special instance, but they have also badly damaged their whole case. What has led to the change? Schrader's summing up will indicate the answer. “The reader is aware,” he says, “that this passage has been the subject of much discussion. Objections were raised by the critics to a statement which had no place in the Books of Kings, and it was thought that this passage should be severed from the narrative, as being altogether unhistorical. It was argued, in the *first* place, that we have no other mention in the historical books of a supremacy wielded by the Assyrians at that time (700-650) in Western Asia, such as this account pre-supposes; and in the *second* place, that we here read that Manasseh was transported to Babel, and not to Nineveh, as we should have expected if the king, who carried him away into captivity, was an Assyrian. Both objections lose their force in the presence of the inscriptions. As to the first, we know that even Asarhaddon, towards the end

* *The Higher Criticism*, etc., pp. 458-461.

of his reign, had reduced to subjection the whole of Syria and Egypt. In both the lists of the twenty-two tributary kings of the Chatti country (that is, in the present case, in Phœnicia, Philistia, and the Cyprian inland-states), which have been handed down to us by Asarhaddon and (as a parallel list) by Asurbanipal, we find no less a personage mentioned than this Manasseh himself: *Minasi sar mat Jaudi* (Manasseh king of the country of Judah).

"Now, it is not probable," continues Schrader, "that the event we are considering happened as early as in the reign of Asarhaddon. Not a word is said by Asarhaddon, in the inscription containing the above list, about any insurrection in the Palestinian States (it was the Phœnician Sidon that had to be forcibly reduced to obedience). And we have certainly not the slightest hint of Manasseh's opposition to Asarhaddon, when the latter conducted his great conquering expedition against Egypt towards the close of his reign. On the other hand, we know from Assurbanipal, his successor, that Mât MARTU, 'the Western country,' meaning Phœnicia and Palestine, was about the middle of his reign (about 648-7 B.C. and previously) involved along with Elam, the land Guti, and Millukki-Kush, in the revolt of his rebellious brother Samas-sum-ukin. We may assume, with perfect confidence, that Manasseh was included among the Palestino-Phœnician rebels. At least, he may have drawn upon himself the suspicion of having an understanding with Assurbanipal's rebellious brother. In order to clear himself of this suspicion, or to furnish the great king

with guarantees of his faithfulness and submission, he was conveyed away to Babel."*

We have already referred to Assurbanipal, the last great monarch who filled the throne of Assyria, and in whose reign there can be no doubt Manasseh's captivity and restoration occurred. His is fortunately one of the best known reigns. "Few kings," says M. Oppert, "have left so great a number of interesting inscriptions." In the beginning of his reign he had to subdue Egypt, which had revolted in the last days of his father Esarhaddon, and in connection with that invasion and conquest he names twenty-two kings who paid him homage. Among these we find "Manasseh king of Judah." Manasseh ascended the throne in 698 B.C., according to the Bible chronology, and he reigned fifty-five years. This notice by Assurbanipal so far confirms these statements, seeing that it assures us that Manasseh was still reigning about 660 B.C. At that time, however, the king of Judah was still numbered among the faithful tributaries of Assyria. But, as Schrader shows in the passage just quoted, a number of years afterwards Assurbanipal's throne was threatened by a widespread and formidable conspiracy. It was led by his brother, to whom he had entrusted the vice-royalty of Babylon. He says:

"Saulmaginu my younger brother, benefits I had given to him, and had appointed him to the kingdom of Babylon. . . . Tribute and taxes I caused to return, and more than the father my begetter, I did for him."†

* *Cuneiform Inscriptions and the Old Testament*, vol. II., p. 53-55.

† *Records of the Past*, vol. i., p. 75.

He then dwells upon the ingratitude and treason with which these benefits were repaid. Saulmaginu seems to have cloaked his designs with the most elaborate deceit. He sent the sons of the leading Babylonian nobles to entreat his brother's friendship; and, while Assurbanipal was lavishing his gifts upon these hypocritical witnesses of most welcome Babylonian loyalty, Saulmaginu's messengers were passing secretly and swiftly through all the neighbouring courts, and were engaging still more distant princes in the attempt to cast off the Assyrian yoke. He says:—

"The people of Akkad, Chaldea, Aram, and the sea-coast, from Agaba to Babsalimitu, tributaries dependent on me; he caused to revolt against my hand. And Ummanigas the fugitive, who took the yoke of my kingdom, of whom in Elam I had appointed him to the kingdom; and the kings of Goim, Syria, and Ethiopia . . . all of them he caused to rebel, and with him they set their faces."*

This reference to "Syria and Ethiopia" shows how widespread the conspiracy was, and proves that the entire West was involved in it. Manasseh and his kingdom had been fired with the delusive hope that they were now to escape from the harsh treatment of Assyria. Can we say when this war broke out? From the fact that 2 Kings makes no reference whatever to any change in Manasseh's character and action, it seems clear that only a mere fragment of that long reign of fifty-five years could have remained to the

* *Ibid.*, p. 76.

penitent king—a fragment so small that it was quite inadequate to undo the evil that had been resolutely persisted in for half a century. The revolt was subdued, at least in Chaldea, in Assurbanipal's sixth campaign; but, though this seems to carry us well into this monarch's forty-two years' reign, we have no means, so far, of determining the exact date. Happily, however, we find that Ptolemy's list of Babylonian kings helps us. It proves its reliability in the date it gives to Saulmaginu's reign. That is set down as beginning in 667 B.C., just one year after his brother Assurbanipal attained the supreme power and ascended the throne of Assyria. According to this list, Saulmaginu reigns twenty years, and "Kineladanu," evidently Assurbanipal, becomes king of Babylon in 647.* Shortly after this time, then, must Manasseh have been taken to Babylon, been received into favour, and been sent back to Jerusalem. Let us now mark how this agrees with the Scripture chronology?

Manasseh began to reign in ...	698 B.C.
and, having reigned	55 years, he must
have died in	643 B.C.

But, if the revolt was quelled in Babylonia only in 647 B.C., Manasseh's return must have fallen somewhere about 645 B.C.—that is, about *two years before his death*. In those two years—the last of the life of an old and broken man—little could have been accomplished in the way of reform. How marvelously these dates fall in with the statements of the

* See also Schrader, vol. II., p. 59.

Chronicles I need not say. Wellhausen's verdict upon the claims of these Books is as follows: "The conclusion is forced upon us," he says, "that the Book of Kings cited by the Chronicler is a late compilation far removed from actual tradition, and in relation to the canonical Book of Kings it can only be explained as an apocryphal amplification after the manner in which the scribes taught the sacred history."* According to this, *Chronicles* do not possess even the value of tradition. It is, according to him, a deliberate falsification—"an apocryphal amplification," of the tradition. And yet here again are facts, the knowledge of which we owe to this Book alone; and, when we carefully compare its statements with the stone records of Assyria, we discover an accordance so striking that the verdict of the higher criticism is left a monument of recklessness and absurdity.

It will be remembered that the Scripture indicates that this campaign against the West was not led by the king of Assyria in person. We are told that it was the action of his generals. "Wherefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria" (2 Chronicles xxxiii. 11). It has been pointed out by Assyriologists that Assurbanipal does not appear to have taken part personally in his campaigns, and that this statement of Chronicles is quite in keeping with what was a feature of this reign. But Assurbanipal himself enables us to go farther than this. He tells us how the western campaign was conducted. He says:—

* *Prolegomena*, p. 227.

"Yautah son of Hazael, king of Kedar. . . against my agreement he sinned and he discontinued the presents. The people of Arabia with him he caused to revolt, and carried away the plunder of Syria. My army which on the border of his country was stationed I sent against him. His overthrow they accomplished. The people of Arabia all who came they destroyed with the sword. . Oxen, sheep, asses, camels, and men they carried off without number." *

The reader will notice the repeated "they." Apparently the army is not under any one outstanding leader—the Tartan, for example. There are several leaders, and the Scripture phrase here again presents us with *an exact representation* of this, when it speaks of "the captains of the king of Assyria." That phrase implies a close, full, and minute acquaintance with the events of the time.

We now meet an expression which exercised the ingenuity and the judgment of commentators of former days. We are told that the captains of the host of the king of Assyria took Manasseh "among the thorns." The word in the original is *bachochim*, which is composed of the Hebrew preposition *b'* "in," or "with," and *choach*, "a thorn," or "thorn-bush," and also a "hook." One good old commentator has the following note upon the passage:—"Among the thorns; in some thicket where he thought to hide himself from the Assyrians till he could make an

* *Records of the Past*, vol. ix., pp. 61, 62.

escape, as the Israelites formerly used to do (1 Sam. xiii. 6). Or, *with hooks*; a metaphorical expression. Or, *in his forts*, that is, in one of them." Research has now shown that it is in the second of these senses that the word has to be taken, and that poor Manasseh must have discovered that "with hooks" or "rings" was no "metaphorical expression." Through this depth of humiliation many a noble captive of the Assyrians had to pass. A ring was passed through the lip. A cord or chain was attached to the ring; and thus the captive was led along through the streets of his own city, along the high-roads to Assyria, and



PRISONERS LED WITH RINGS.

finally brought into the presence of the Assyrian monarch.

It deserves notice also that this method of humiliating rebel princes seems to have been in special favour with Assurbanipal. In an inscription, which has been only recently fully translated, he describes his treatment of an Arabian king. He says: "With the knife which I use to cut meat I made a hole in his jaw. I passed a ring through his upper lip. I attached to it a chain with which one leads the dogs in leash." *

But, as we have seen, one of the chief objections of the critics rested upon the supposed absurdity of imagining that an Assyrian king was to be found *at Babylon*. The Chronicles tell us that the captains of

* *Notes D'Assyriologie*, by M. Alfred Boissier, in *The Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, vol. xx., p. 163.

the king of Assyria carried Manasseh "to Babylon" (verse 11). I have already quoted the words of Dr. Samuel Davidson, that diligent populariser in England of the objections of German unbelief: "Besides," he says, "it is related that the king of Assyria took Manasseh to *Babylon*, instead of to his own capital, to the very city which was then disposed to rebel against him. That is improbable." But Dr. Davidson and his critical masters were writing and misrepresenting in dense ignorance of the facts. Babylon was *not* "then disposed to rebel against" Assurbanipal. The rebellion had been put down ruthlessly and completely. The Assyrian king had taken to himself the dominion of Babylon immediately upon his brother's capture and execution. This is now a certainty. One of Assurbanipal's cylinders is dated by the term of office of a certain Babylonian magistrate. That means that Assurbanipal then regarded himself as a Babylonian king. A still clearer proof of this is found in a tablet which is dated "Erech, in the month of Nisan, the twentieth day, the twentieth year of Assurbanipal." During the twenty-one last years of his life, he personally held the supreme power in Babylon as well as in Assyria, and his reign in the former country began in the year in which he re-conquered the country, 647 B.C. It was, consequently, quite a matter of course, just as the Bible represents it to have been, that the captains of the king of Assyria should carry Manasseh to Babylon.

What are we to say, however, of the sudden and

marvellous reversal of Manasseh's lot? The guilty monarch, tortured with rings and bound with fetters, is pardoned; and not only pardoned, but also restored to his former dominion. This, we are told, came to pass through his having humbled himself before a greater than Assurbanipal. "And when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto Him: and He was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem to his kingdom" (verses 12, 13). This, Davidson tells us, is, in the judgment of the critics, "unhistorical." The "Chronist" was led away by "his love of the marvellous." Have the monuments anything to say in regard to this matter? They have; and, as usual, it is to the confusion of the critics. Such treatment of sufficiently abased rebels seems to have been a marked feature in this very king's policy. On a mutilated cylinder of his, mention was made of someone, apparently not far distant from Manasseh's kingdom, who had experienced Assurbanipal's mercy. It runs:—

"I restored and favoured him. The towers which over against Babel king of Tyre I had raised, I pulled down; on sea and land all his roads which I had taken I opened."*

But a complete record exists of a still more striking instance of the royal clemency. Egypt had been subdued, and the kings among whom the territory had been divided were reinstated by the Assyrian king.

* *Records of the Past*, vol. ix., p. 40.

"Afterwards," says Assurbanipal, "all those kings whom I had appointed sinned against me. They did not keep the oath of the great gods." They sent messengers to Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia, proposing that he and they should make common cause against the Assyrians.

"They devised," says the inscription, "a wicked plot. My generals of this plot heard: their messengers and despatches they captured, and saw their seditious work. These kings they took, and in bonds of iron and fetters of iron bound their hands and feet. . . . And the people of Sais, Mendes, Zoan, and the rest of the cities, all with them revolted and devised an evil design. Small and great with the sword they caused to be destroyed. One they did not leave in the midst. Their corpses they throw down in the dust. . . . they destroyed the towers of the cities. These kings who had devised evil against the army of Assyria, alive to Nineveh, into my presence they brought. To Necho . . of them, favour I granted him, ... costly garments I placed upon him, ornaments of gold, his royal image I made for him, bracelets of gold I fastened on his limbs, a steel sword its sheath of gold, in the glory of my name, more than I write, I gave him. Chariots, horses, and mules, for his royal riding I appointed him. My generals as governors to assist him with him I sent. The place where the father my begetter, in Sais to the kingdom

had appointed him to his district I restored him. . . . Benefits and favours beyond those of the father my begetter I caused to restore and gave to him." *

Manasseh's was simply an additional instance of the clemency of the Assyrian king, who apparently desired to bind states to him by affection, as well as to suppress rebellion by terror. The effect of his kindness to the king of Judah is no doubt to be seen in the loyalty of Josiah, Manasseh's grandson, who in the days of Assyria's need threw himself between it and the Egyptian invader. The reader will have noticed the repeated phrase "my generals" in this inscription. There we have a still more complete proof of the minute accuracy of the Scripture as shown in the words "the captains of the king of Assyria." And now, in closing our notice of these Books, let me ask the reader once more to mark the part which they have played in the present attack upon the Bible. Wellhausen and his followers will not allow them the value even of tradition. They are rejected as an "apocryphal amplification" even of that unreliable substitute for history. What drove him and them to that conclusion? The only reply is that they were forced to adopt it by their theories. These lay it down as absolute fact that the Law, the Priesthood, and the Temple ritual had no existence, while the Chronicles declare that they both existed and flourished. The Books had consequently to be written down as "apocryphal amplifications." But

* Geo. Smith, *Assyrian Discoveries*, pp. 325-327.

another test has, at this very time, been providentially provided. Records have come to light whose historical character no man can impugn; and, tested by them, the Chronicles, as we have just seen, are shown to be history. In the light shed by these records, we find not the slightest trace of "apocryphal amplification," nor the faintest shadow even of blundering, exaggerating, tradition. We find instead a sober history, exact in its minute details, and in its slightest references. Now, if theories compel one kind of estimate of these Books, and facts compel quite another and opposite estimate, what is the inevitable conclusion? Is it not that the theories and the facts are in deadly antagonism? The critics imagined that it was the character of the Chronicles that was in question. But they were mistaken. It was the character of their system, which they name their "science." And now the epithets, which they boldly affixed to this part of Scripture, have to be removed and to be placed upon their so-called science. It is the higher criticism which we must now admit to be "improbable" and "unhistorical," and a mere bundle of "apocryphal amplifications after the manner in which the scribes treated the sacred history.'

THE BOOK OF EZRA.

CHAPTER I.

THE DECREE OF CYRUS.

THE Second Book of Chronicles ends with the announcement of Israel's restoration, and if the reader will compare the closing words of 2 Chronicles with the commencement of Ezra, he will note some clear marks of distinct intention. The decree of Cyrus is only partially quoted in 2 Chronicles. The quotation stops, indeed, in the middle of a sentence. It is strikingly significant of the lack of real Bible study that this is usually overlooked, and that we are generally told that 2 Chronicles ends and Ezra begins with the record of Cyrus's decree; and the inference usually drawn is that both Books must have been written by the same hand, and that this hand was probably Ezra's. A closer study of this common passage would have detected the wisdom of Him whom the writer of 2 Chron. and the writer of Ezra equally served. The last words of 2 Chron. are these: "Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given me; and He hath charged me to build Him an house in Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all His people? The Lord his God be with him, and let him go up" (xxxvi. 23).

When we now pass on to Ezra we find that this is not the whole of the decree of Cyrus. It is only a

part of it; and it is a part of it, too, which stops, strangely enough, in the middle of a sentence. Ezra gives us the completed sentence and the rest of the decree. The Chronicler quotes: "The Lord his God be with him, and let him go up," and, as I have said, stops there. Ezra continues: "to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (He is the God,) which is in Jerusalem. And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem" (Ezra i. 3, 4).

In these quotations, the purposes of the two Books are revealed at a glance. Chronicles is written for the people of the Return, and all that the writer does there is to emphasise the fact of their restoration. Ezra, on the other hand, tells of the first task to which the returned tribes had to address themselves. He speaks of the building of the Temple, the obstacles which were placed in their way, their final triumph, their sinning and their repenting. Hence it is needful that he should give the decree of Cyrus in full, and place before the reader the very specific directions of Cyrus about the rebuilding of the Temple, and his command to help with silver, and gold, and beasts of burden those who set out with that task in view. But nothing of this enters into the purpose of Chronicles. Here the eye rests not on the opening experiences of the immigrants. Our gaze is concentrated upon the great fact, so full of

hope for this waiting earth, that Israel is once more being gathered out from among the nations, and that they are being again planted in that land which was promised to the fathers. The whole of these two Books of Chronicles are a prolonged display to Israel of the secret of their past failures; and, now that this light has been shed upon their way, they are reminded of the fresh opportunity for which the light is given. All this is not only indicated, but is also laid upon Israel's heart in the arresting of the Chronicler's pen just as it has placed these words upon the page: "Let him go up."

Criticism has failed to notice this and much else, and has misunderstood the Book. Dr. Samuel Davidson says: "The spirit of the work is Levitical His" (the Chronicler's) standpoint "is an *ecclesiastical* one." Now, if that were true, the Chronicler's pen would have dwelt upon the decree to build the Temple. He would have described its restoration, and would have enumerated the gifts by which it was to be beautified and enriched. But of all this there is not one word. Our gaze is carried above and beyond the Temple, to the call to a nobler work—the preparation of the spiritual Temple, that God the Lord may dwell among them.

Turning now, however, to Ezra, is this decree of Cyrus authentic? Have we history here, or late tradition with its blunderings, distortions, and exaggerations? Davidson indeed speaks of the edict as "a Judaising paraphrase of the original;" but it is recognised that the fact of the decree cannot be

successfully challenged. For it is undeniable that the Jews were carried and driven away in the time of Nebuchadnezzar, and that they are again restored to their own land in the beginning of the reign of Cyrus. That restoration necessitated official acts and documents, and there must consequently have been some decree which legalised the Return, and which ended Israel's captivity. It was also imagined that Cyrus's religious beliefs made him sympathise with the faith of the Israelites, and that their liberation was owing to this common sentiment. But, while this notion has been rudely swept aside by later discovery, the confirmation of the Scripture has been made still more complete. The belief that Cyrus was a Zoroastrian, and, therefore, a determined foe to idolatry, is now known to be quite unfounded. Inscriptions by Nabonidus, the father of Belshazzar, and by Cyrus himself, have been discovered, which throw welcome light upon the fall of Babylon and the Persian conquest. Dr. Pinches discovered, in 1880, Cyrus's own account of his slow but triumphant advance. "The object of this document, which is called 'The Annalistic Tablet,'" says Prof. Sayce, "was two-fold; on the one hand to chronicle the events of the previous seventeen years, on the other to trace the rise of the power of Cyrus, and to prove that his conquest of Babylon was due to the impiety of Nabonidus. The chosen of Bel-Merodach, the true worshipper of the gods of Babylonia was Cyrus and not Nabonidus." *

* *The Higher Criticism*, etc., p. 499.

This is an unexpected development. Cyrus, so far from being a stern and persecuting monotheist, is an idolater, and attributes his victory over the king of Babylon to the gods of Babylon. Every effort was apparently made to gain the favour of the Babylonian priesthood, and the tablet itself takes its place among these efforts. This was apparently part of Cyrus's settled policy. He followed the same plan with regard to Israel, although in this latter case some other motive must have intervened, seeing that Israel was powerless either to help or to harm the new dominion. But, by whatever motive Cyrus was led to show this favour to the Jews, his published language would have been as carefully calculated to honour the God of Israel and to please the Jews, as it was to honour the gods of Babylon and to secure the affection of their worshippers.

This would have largely explained the features which have led Davidson and his fellow critics to describe the decree recorded in the Bible as "a Judaising paraphrase of the original." But this important inscription of the great warrior prince carries us much farther. It brings to us fresh surprises; for it seems as if in some way or other *Cyrus had come under the influence of Jewish ideas*. "In reading the words of Cyrus," writes Prof. Sayce, "we are irresistibly reminded of the language in which the Books of Samuel describe the rejection of Saul and the selection of David in his place.

"But it is not only," he continues, "the Books of Samuel of which the inscription reminds us, there

are other Books and passages in the Old Testament to the language of which it presents a remarkable resemblance. *It is, in fact, the most Hebraic of all the cuneiform texts known to us*, and on this account is more than usually difficult to translate. . . . The construction of the sentences is often wanting in that simplicity which generally distinguishes the syntax of the Babylonian and Assyrian monuments; we are reminded by it of the language of the later Hebrew prophets which similarly gives occasion to a disputed interpretation. Even the vocabulary of the inscription is not altogether free from what we may term a Hebraism. Twice we find *maliku*, the Hebrew *melech*, used in the sense of 'king,' in the place of *sarru*, the Hebrew *sar*. Everywhere else in cuneiform literature *sarru* is the 'king,' *maliku* the subordinate 'prince.' It is only here that the Hebrew usage is followed, according to which *melech* was the 'king' and *sar* the 'prince.'*"

These facts may be left to speak for themselves. As has been already said, there must have been decrees issued; and now Cyrus's own inscription sets before us a man, not only ready to acknowledge to the full the God of Israel, but one apparently well acquainted also with the Hebrew Scriptures, and influenced by them even when detailing events which have no immediate connection with the Jews.

The careful restoration of the sacred vessels is quite in keeping with what we know of Cyrus's procedure. He indicates that the cause of the fall of

* Pages 503, 504; also *Records of the Past*, vol. v. (New Series), p. 146.

Nabonidus was his carrying away the gods of the Babylonian cities and bringing them to Babylon. Cyrus says, in the Annalistic Tablet :

“From the month Chisleu to the month Adar (November to February) the gods of the country of Akkad (lower Babylonia) whom Nabonidus had transferred to Babylon returned to their own cities.” *

And again :

“From [the city of] . . . to the cities of Zamban, Me-Turnút (and) Dur-Ili, as far as the frontier of Quti (Kurdistan), the cities [which lie upon] the Tigris, whose seats had been established from of old, I restored the gods who dwelt within them to their places and I founded (for them) a seat that should be long enduring ; all their peoples I collected and restored their habitations. And the gods of Sumer and Accad ” (upper and lower Babylonia) “whom Nabonidus, to the anger of (Merodach) the lord of the gods, had brought into Babylon, by the command of Merodach the great lord, in peace in their sanctuaries I settled, in seats according to their hearts. May all the gods whom I have brought into their own cities intercede daily before Bel and Nebo that my days may be long, may they pronounce blessings upon me, and may they say to Merodach my lord : Let Cyrus the king, thy worshipper, and Kambyses his son [accom-

* *Records of the Past*, vol. v. (New Series), p. 163.

plish the desire?] of their heart; [let them enjoy length?] of days. . . . I have settled [the peoples] of all countries in a place of rest." *

The wide difference between the spirit of this inscription and that of the inscriptions of the kings of Assyria will be felt by everyone. Here there is no revelling in slaughter; there are no enumerations of kings and princes flayed alive, or impaled before the gates of their cities; and there is no gloating over vast districts strewn with corpses of vanquished foes. For the first time in such annals (so far as we at present know them) we hear the words of wide compassion. The prisoners are freed, the exiles are restored to their own lands, and the gods are carried back to their ancient temples. How fully the restoration of the Jews, and the very wording of the decree of Cyrus recorded in the Scripture agree with his own inscription will be at once apparent. Cyrus's tablet and the Scripture record are deeply marked by the same features; they breathe the same spirit. The subjugated nations shared in Israel's joy just as the whole earth will yet share in their coming deliverance, and gladness, and glory, when a greater conqueror than Cyrus shall respond to the call: "Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O most mighty, with Thy glory and Thy majesty. And in Thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness" (Psalm xlv. 3, 4). And that Cyrus's kindness to Israel does not proceed from his conversion to the Jewish

faith, but co-exists along with a recognition of idolatry, shows no lack of accord with Scripture. The prediction concerning the Persian king in Isaiah ran thus: "For Jacob My servant's sake, and Israel Mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee THOUGH THOU HAST NOT KNOWN ME: I am the Lord and there is none else, there is no God beside Me: I girded thee, THOUGH THOU HAST NOT KNOWN ME" (xlv. 4, 5). Here it is foretold that one who does not know God, and who, therefore, is an idolater, is to perform all God's will in the restoration of His people. That this passage was shown to Cyrus is probable. We have the echo of it in the words of the decree—"He is *the* God." The building of the Temple, and the restoration of the sacred vessels are also easily explained. Other nations had their gods restored to them, and favours were shown to these supposed deities. But in the case of the Israelites no image could be given to them, for no image of their God had ever existed. Consequently, all that Babylon possessed pertaining to His service was given back, and a decree was issued that His Temple should be re-built.

CHAPTER II.

THE SAMARITANS AND THEIR CONFLICT WITH
THE JEWS.

IN the fourth chapter of Ezra we read that the Samaritans desired to be associated with the returned Israelites in the re-building of the Temple. They advanced the plea that they also were worshippers of Jehovah. "We do sacrifice unto Him," said they, "since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assur, who brought us up hither." But theirs was the kind of worship against which Israel had long been warned; for the Samaritans "feared the Lord, and served their own gods" (2 Kings xvii. 33). To such a request, Israel, if it was to be faithful, could give only one reply. That reply was given, with one easily foreseen result. The weak remnant of the Return had to encounter bitter and long-enduring hostility, and daring misrepresentations, which at last bore fruit in the temporary cessation of the building of the Temple.

What we have now to deal with, however, is the historical references. They say here that they were set down in Samaria, not by Sargon or by Sennacherib, but by Esarhaddon, Sennacherib's son. That they could be mistaken in regard to a matter of that sort is not to be imagined. But mistakes might very easily have crept into a mere tradition of what they

said; and if Ezra, or some other who penned this Book, is nothing better than a collector of traditions, no one could insist that this notice should be accepted as history. That is the very condition of uncertainty with regard to the Bible to which criticism is attempting to reduce us. It is worth noticing this, then, to prove once more that we have actual history before us, and not mistaken, or even uncertain, tradition. The Samaritans, in writing to Artaxerxes in the Syrian tongue, describe themselves as "the Dinaites, the Apharsathchites, the Tarpelites, the Apharsites, the Archevites, the Babylonians, the Susanchites, the Dehavites, and the Elamites, and the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Asnapper brought over, and set in the cities of Samaria" (Ezra iv. 9, 10). The name "Asnapper" has created some difficulty. Some have supposed it to be the name of a general serving under one of the Assyrian kings. But that supposition will not bear reflection. Whoever Asnapper may be, he is not a subordinate official however highly placed, but the absolute disposer of the lot of these peoples. It must be remembered that they are writing in the Aramæan tongue, and that the names of kings were more or less changed when pronounced and written in Aramæan, as in other languages. Gelzer, Delitzsch, and Schrader believe it to be a corruption of the name Assurbanipal, the son of Esarhaddon. The names which have come down to us through the Greek historians have made us familiar enough with such transformations. They mention that the *first* arrival of their colonies to¹/₂

place under Esarhaddon. The transportation of the rest was apparently completed under his son and successor Assurbanipal. It is probable that the first colonists who were poured by Sargon into the vacant territory of the ten tribes had not thriven, and that these new arrivals, perhaps more generously treated by their conquerors and entering the land in full vigour, at once assumed the control of the community.

We have now to ask whether these two kings had actually poured fresh colonists into this region, and had drawn away inhabitants from the cities which are here named. The answer can be given in a word. This was actually done both by Esarhaddon and by his son Assurbanipal. It will be noticed that "the Susanchites" and "the Elamites" join in this representation to the Persian king. That is, they were men of Susa, that is, of Shushan, the favoured abode of the Persian monarch, and of Elam. "Assurbanipal," says Schrader, "was the only Assyrian monarch who penetrated into the heart of Elam, and in particular gained possession of Susa."* Assurbanipal also tells us that he carried away inhabitants from Elam. The policy of exiling captured peoples was in constant operation under both these monarchs. "The cuneiform inscriptions," says Schrader, "contain no express mention of the settlement of Eastern races in Samaria, to which this Biblical passage alludes. From the records of Esarhaddon we only learn that he transferred Eastern populations into the land Chatti generally, that is, Syria, inclusive of Phœnicia and

* Vol. ii., p. 65.

Palestine. This latter statement cannot admit of doubt." * As in the case of the Jews, so apparently also in Samaria, the first colonists had great difficulties to encounter, and they required reinforcements from time to time to enable them to possess the land.

Archæology has shed light upon various references in this account of the attempt of the Samaritans to defeat the effort to rebuild the Temple, and to replant the Jewish people upon their own soil. There are four kings named in chapter iv. We read there that the Samaritans 'hired counsellors against them . . . all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia" (verse 5). These are the limits within which the conflict in this special form lasted. It began in the days of Cyrus, and it went on till the reign of Darius. It then stopped, for the simple but sufficient reason that Darius intervened and confirmed the decree of Cyrus. How this came about we shall see immediately. The Scripture proceeds: "And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, wrote they unto him an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem" (verse 5). That bolt fell harmless. No decree was issued by the Persian king: and, so far as we know, no investigation even was made. But they succeeded better in the next reign. "And in the days of Artaxerxes wrote Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of their companions, unto Artaxerxes king of Persia" (verse 6). This brought back a reply which must have caused great rejoicing in Samaria. Give

ye now commandment," so ran the royal rescript, "to cause these men to cease, and that this city be not builded. . . . Then ceased the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem. So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia" (verses 21-24).

Who were these two kings who are named here Ahasuerus and Artaxerxes? It is evident that they were the successors of Cyrus and the predecessors of Darius. Now we know that the kings who intervened between Cyrus and Darius were two exactly—Cambyses, the son of Cyrus, and Smerdis, a usurper. But it will be observed that these are not the names which appear in the Scripture. There, instead of Cambyses, we find Ahasuerus, in the Hebrew text *Akhashverosh*, or Xerxes; and instead of Smerdis, Artaxerxes. This led earlier critics to contend that the Darius mentioned must have been the second among the Persian kings who bore that name, Darius Nothus. He began to reign in 424 B.C. If the reader bears in mind that the first Jewish colonists went up to Jerusalem in the first year of Cyrus (Ezra i. 1), that is, in 538 B.C., he will see how impossible that supposition is. The Temple builders, whose labours had been suspended, are alive and vigorous in the second year of the Darius spoken of by Ezra (vi. 13). In other words, the long interval between 538 B.C. and 423 B.C. (the *second* year of Darius Nothus) had not impaired the energies, nor altered, in any way, the purpose of these men! For 115 years they had been standing waiting for

permission to resume their labours, and when the permission came, they commenced at once and completed their work with great joy! The glaring absurdity of this contention has gradually silenced the critics, and it is now recognised that the Darius here mentioned is Darius Hystaspis, who began to reign in 521 B.C., or seventeen years after Cyrus conquered the Babylonian empire. We must, therefore, identify the Ahasuerus of Ezra iv. 6 with Cambyses, and the Artaxerxes of verse 7 with the usurper, the false Smerdis. These are the two kings who, in the Persian lists, stand between Cyrus and Darius Hystaspis.

“That Persian kings had often two names,” says Canon Rawlinson, “is a well-known fact of history.”* We meet this diversity especially in the references to the usurper, whose history was thus strangely mixed up with the fortunes of the Temple at Jerusalem. He is sometimes spoken of as Smerdis, at other times as Bardes, while Darius himself calls him Gomates. It is only since the Assyrian discoveries have been made that we have been able to understand the part played by the great conspiracy, which had almost succeeded in ending the Persian dominion just as it had seated itself upon the throne of the nations. It was a religious revolt. The Persians believed in the existence of two great opposing Unseen Powers. Ormazd, the Good Principle, was the God who was alone to be worshipped; Ahriman, the Bad Principle, was a power to be dreaded and re-

* *Speaker's Commentary.*

sisted. Anciently, "they possessed no hierarchy, no sacred books, no learning or science, no occult lore, no fixed ceremonial of religion. Besides their belief in Ormazd and Ahriman, which was the pith and marrow of their religion, they worshipped the sun and moon, under the names of Mithra and Homa, and acknowledged the existence of a number of lesser deities, good and evil genii, the creation respectively of the great powers of light and darkness. Their worship consisted chiefly in religious chaunts, analagous to the Vedic hymns of their Indian brethren, wherewith they hoped to gain the favour and protection of Ormazd and the good spirits under his governance." *

But the Persians were surrounded on all sides by the devotees of another religion, which was a nature worship, and which paid Divine honours to all the elements, and especially to fire. This worship is Magism, and "was from a remote antiquity the religion of the Scythic tribes, who were thickly spread in early times over the whole extent of Western Asia." † It derived this name from the tribe of the Magi, which was alone permitted to supply the members of the priesthood. It is extremely difficult to say what were the differences between Magism and the early Persian belief. Lenormant indicates that the two religions were at one in their fundamental ideas. They both believed in the existence of these two great Principles, the Good and the Evil, and the radical difference between them lay in

* Rawlinson, *History of Herodotus*, vol. i., p. 349. † Page 348.

the fact that, while the Persians worshipped Ormazd the Good Principle only, and execrated Ahriman the Evil Principle, the Magians paid their worship entirely to Ahriman.

However, this may be, there was constant and bitter hostility between the two religions; and various attempts were made by the Magi to overthrow the dominion of a religion which they hated. I have said that this struggle left its trace on the fortunes of the Second Temple. Cambyses, the son of Cyrus, had sent orders to slay his brother Smerdis whom he had left in authority at Susa, while he himself conducted the Egyptian campaign which formed the great feature of his reign. The Magi seized the opportunity to place one of their own creed upon the throne, who represented himself to be Smerdis, the brother of Cyrus. A herald was sent to Cambyses, who met him returning with his army to Persia. When the announcement was made that he was deposed Cambyses slew himself, and for a time Magianism triumphed in the new empire. A few of the leading Persian nobility however, by secret and prompt action, redeemed the situation. The false Smerdis was slain, and Darius, the son of Hystaspes, was raised to the throne. His first years were occupied in overthrowing one pretender after another in various districts of his extensive empire. He himself has described these conflicts in his great inscription graven in the rock at Behistun. The following passage has special importance for us:—

“And Darius the king says: This is what I

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did by the grace of Ormazd, when I gained the kingdom. The son of Cyrus, named



CAPTIVES LED BEFORE DARIUS (from the Behistun Inscription).

Cambyses, was king here before me. This Cambyses had a brother named Smerdis. They had the same mother and the same

father. Afterwards this Cambyses killed Smerdis. The people did not know that Smerdis was killed. Then Cambyses went to Egypt. The people became bad, and many falsehoods grew up in the provinces, as well in Persia, as in Media, as in the other lands. And then a man, a Magian, named Gomates, from Pasargada, near the mount named Arakadris, there he arose. On the 14th day of the month Vijakna, thus he arose: To the people he told lies, and said: 'I am Smerdis, the son of Cyrus, the brother of Cambyses.' Then all the people revolted from Cambyses, went over to him, and the Persians, and the Medes, and the other nations. He seized the kingdom. On the 9th day of the month Garmapada he took the royalty from Cambyses. Then Cambyses died, killing himself."

Darius then describes the reign of terror which followed. Gomates slew everyone who had known the real Smerdis, and all whom he feared. No man dared to say a word against him, until Darius with a few men put "Gomates the Magian," and his principal adherents to death. The inscription continues:—

"And Darius the king says: The kingdom which had been robbed from our race I restored it. I put it again in its place. As it had been before me, thus I did. I RE-ESTABLISHED THE TEMPLES OF THE GODS WHICH GOMATES THE MAGIAN HAD DESTROYED, and I re-instituted, in favour of the people, the calendar and the

holy language, and I gave back to the families what Gomates the Magian had taken away.”*

It is plain, therefore, that the triumph of Gomates had led to a religious revolution. The temples of the gods were destroyed. The “hired counsellors” were now able to accomplish the desire of those who had so frequently paid them for a service which they had previously been unable to render. Gomates forbade the re-erection of the Temple. This was entirely in keeping with the constant endeavour which characterised his brief reign. It was equally in keeping with Darius’s endeavour to repair the havoc worked by the Magian, that he should cause search to be made for Cyrus’s decree regarding the re-building of the Temple; and that, when the decree was found, he should issue his orders that nothing should be lacking for the work. The keen interest in this work which is displayed in every line of Darius’s decree, as recorded in Ezra vi., and his directions to provide for the expenses of the work and for the sacrifices, reveal the very spirit which breathes in the Behistun Inscription. And here, again, the Scripture is not only in perfect accord with the time, it also reveals it to us. Those very kings who were supposed to have been made to speak as Jews, and whose decrees, in other words, were supposed to have been made for them by the writer, or the writers, of Ezra, have revealed themselves in the Scripture record in the very same way as in the deeds which they did, and in the monuments which research has now restored to us.

* *Records of the Past*, vol. vii., pp. 89-91

It will be noticed that Cyrus's decree was found only after a persistent search. "Then Darius the king made a decree, and search was made in the house of the rolls, where the treasures were laid up in Babylon. And there was found at Achmetha, in the palace that is in the province of the Medes, a roll, and therein was a record thus written" (vi. 1, 2). In short, the original decree of Cyrus was at length discovered. But several things, of considerable importance now, are here implied. Search was made "in the House of the Rolls." Was there such a Record House—A Register Office—in those ancient times; and were State Register Offices institutions then existing in Persia? In answer to that question, Assyriology has much to say. There *were* such Register Houses in the Assyrian, the Babylonian, and the Persian Empires; and to that fact we largely owe the light which has restored to the world the knowledge of those ancient civilisations. The excavators have come upon some of those Houses of the Rolls, and found in their ruins large stores of the treasured records.

But why were the Record Chambers of Achmetha searched, when it was discovered that those at Babylon (the capital of the kingdom) did not contain the document? The explanation of this shows us once more the clear reflection of the times which the Scriptures always present us. Ecbatana, whose Persian name is reproduced in the Hebrew word Achmetha, was the summer residence of Cyrus. It and Babylon were, therefore, the two places to be

searched; and when Babylon was known not to contain the decree, the immediate inference was that it must, consequently, be resting in the great palace of Ecbatana.

A word also may be said, in closing these notices of Ezra, on the imprecation with which the decree of Darius ends: "And the God that hath caused His name to dwell there destroy all kings and people, that shall put to their hand to alter and to destroy this house of God which is at Jerusalem. I Darius have made a decree; let it be done with speed" (vi. 12). Here we find the very man—the Darius Hystaspis of actual fact. *He concludes his Behistun Inscription in this very fashion.* After saying that those who in future see the tablet and the sculptures, and refrain from destroying them, will find that Ormazd will be a friend to them and bless them, he proceeds:

"And if thou destroy these tablets and these images, and dost not preserve them, Ormazd may kill thee, and thou mayest not have any offspring, and whatsoever thou doest, Ormazd will pronounce his curses on it." *

* *Records of the Past*, vol. vii., pp. 107, 108,

THE BOOK OF ESTHER.

CHAPTER I.

THE CRITICAL ATTACKS.

IN an Introduction to the Book of Nehemiah, Canon Rawlinson says: "The authenticity of the Book of Nehemiah is generally admitted. Rationalistic criticism has been disarmed by the fact that the narrative comprises nothing that is miraculous."*

But it is apparently impossible to formulate a rule of this kind for the higher criticism. If Nehemiah comprises nothing that is miraculous, Esther offends still less in that particular. The name of God, as is well-known, is not once mentioned in the Book. There is, indeed, a most rigorous exclusion of any Divine or religious reference. There is not one word about prayer in the day of Israel's need, and there is absolute silence as to the offering of praise in the day of their deliverance. If any Book in the Bible might have escaped the tooth of destructive criticism, we should have confidently expected that Esther should do so. But, somehow, from the first day of the critical assault, the most determined attack has been made upon this part of God's Revelation. And to-day the roar of the critical cannon is louder than ever in the endeavour to pound this section of our strong wall into dust.

Semler, who laid the foundations of the higher

* *Speaker's Commentary*, vol. iii., p. 428.

criticism, indicated his opinion that the Book of Esther was a work of pure imagination, and that it was to be taken as a witness to the pride and the arrogance of the Jews. Eichhorn, in his *Introduction to the Old Testament*, treats the Book with much greater fairness; and, while he arranges the objections to its historical character under fourteen heads, supplies answers to these, though confessing that in his judgment there were knots that were still untied.* The effect of Eichhorn's intervention, however, could not be described as re-assuring. De Wette reverts to the condemnation pronounced by Semler. He sweeps aside the explanation, which occurred to unprejudiced scholars as soon as the Book was studied in the light of ancient history—that Ahasuerus was Xerxes. We shall immediately see how that impression has been substantiated, and that is now placed upon a basis which sets it above all possible assault. But this lent too historical a colour to the Book to permit it to remain. De Wette accordingly did what he could to discredit it. He said: "The main point on which the authenticity of this Book has been rested, namely, that Ahasuerus is the same with Xerxes, is very doubtful." He then proceeds to marshal his objections to this identification which are now not worth the paper on which they are written. His conclusion was that the Book "violates all historical probability, and contains the most striking difficulties and many errors in regard to Persian manners."

* Zweyter Band, p. 628.

It will be well for the reader to make a mental note of that last statement; for God, in His gracious Providence, has supplied us with a startling commentary. Theodore Parker, De Wette's translator, evidently thought that it was needful to say something more. He, consequently, adds a section in which he avails himself of Eichhorn's list of objections without even hinting at the replies which the same writer had furnished. He commences with the words: "For a long time this Book was considered a history of actual events. Some writers at this time hold such an opinion, but it is involved in numerous and inexplicable difficulties; for the Book does not bear the marks of an historical composition." And he thus concludes his attack: "It seems most probable the Book was written as a patriotic romance, designed to show that the Jews will be delivered out of all troubles, and he that seeks to injure them shall himself be destroyed. The narrative may have some historical facts for its basis, or be purely fictitious. This, at least, is certain—that it is impossible, at this day, to determine where facts begin and fiction ends."*

Some things have since happened, and some had also happened long before those words were penned (though Mr. Parker seems to have been in ignorance of them), which have cleared away the supposed impossibility of knowing where facts began and ended. And still more had happened before Dr. Samuel Davidson published his *Introduction*; but, apparently, these things, though big with fate for the fame of

* Vol. ii., pp. 340-345.

himself and of his "authorities," had not caught the attention of either himself or them. But the prolonged discussion had, nevertheless, begun to make some impression. After mustering again Eichhorn's objections and a very few others, he concludes: "In consequence of these phenomena we cannot regard the Book as containing only true history. *Neither can it be accounted pure fiction.*"* But this concession is robbed of any value. "Rather," he says, "does true history lie at its foundation, dressed out with a number of imaginary details and circumstances. The basis is true; but a good part of the superstructure, and the air thrown over it, are fabulous."

The new critical school, which has left Davidson and his "authorities" so far behind, has not dealt more kindly, nor indeed so kindly, with the Book of Esther. Kuenen writes:† "The Book of Esther is not an authentic historical writing: in this nearly all critics are now unanimous. But they give very divergent answers to the question, whether the narrative has any foundation in fact; and, if so, what facts? Herzfeld leaves out the most improbable features, and accepts the rest as history. But this method of applying historical criticism—one might call it the reducing method—is not allowable, in the present case at any rate. The impossibilities and improbabilities do not lie upon the surface here, but pervade the whole narrative. . . . The Book of Esther, in a word, is a *romance*." The italics are Kuenen's own. The writer of the article "Esther" in *The Encyclopædia Britannica*

* Vol. II., p. 162.

† *Religion of Israel*, vol. III., p. 148.

holds the balances between the two opinions; but, like most mediators of the kind, he does not help matters much. He concludes his survey with the expression of the conviction that a comparison of Esther with the apocryphal additions made to the Book in the Greek translation, and with the apocryphal books of Judith and Tobit, "is distinctly favourable to its historical verisimilitude;" but he thinks, nevertheless, that he must admit "some amount of exaggeration . . . the infirmity of an Oriental race." The latest critical opinion, however, up to the time of writing, renews the attack with even more than the old fierceness. In *The Encyclopædia Biblica*, Professor Nöldeke, of Stuttgart, says: "The precise dates and the numerous proper names give the narrative an air of historical accuracy, and at the close we actually find a reference made to 'The Chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia.' Unfortunately, all these pretensions to veracity are belied by the nature of the contents: the story is, in fact, a tissue of improbabilities and impossibilities."

He then proceeds to prove this sweeping statement. "One of the main points in the narrative," he says, "namely, the decree for the massacre of all the Jews in the Persian empire on a day fixed eleven months beforehand, would alone suffice to invalidate the historical character of the Book." The following are his other arguments:

"Further, notwithstanding the dates which he gives us, the author had in reality no notion of chronology. He represents Mordecai as having been

transported to Babylon with King Jeconiah—that is, in the year 597 B.C.—and as becoming prime minister in the twelfth year of Xerxes, that is, in 474 B.C. It is contrary to all that we know of those times for an Achæmenian sovereign to choose a Jewess for his queen, a Jew for his prime minister. . . . It is still harder to believe that royal edicts were issued in the language and writing of each one of the numerous peoples who inhabited the empire. That Mordecai is able to communicate freely with his niece in the harem must be pronounced altogether contrary to the usage of Oriental courts. On the other hand, the queen is represented as unable to send even a message to her husband, in order that the writer may have an opportunity of magnifying the courage of his heroine. Such restrictions, it is needless to say, there can never have been in reality.

“The fabulous character of the Book shows itself likewise in a fondness for pomp and high figures. Note, for example, the feast of 180 days, supplemented by another of seven days.” According to this, the latest critical verdict, the Book has not even “a historical kernel.” “It is impossible,” Nöldeke adds, “to treat the Book as an embellished version of some real event—a ‘historical romance’ like the Persian tale of Bahram-Chōbin, and the novels of Scott and Manzoni—and we are forced to the conclusion that the whole narrative is fictitious.” He thus concludes his somewhat long and monotonous tirade: “In the Book of Esther, the Persian empire is treated as a thing of the past, already invested with the halo of

romance. The writer must, therefore, have lived some considerable time after Alexander the Great, not earlier than the third, probably the second, century before Christ."

In an earlier work, Nöldeke pronounces quite as sweeping a condemnation. He says: "That this Book in all its parts is stripped of historical value is the result already arrived at by our analysis. A more attentive study will more and more demonstrate its fabulous character. The Book swarms with things improbable, impossible. . . . The entire development of the story resembles that of a romance. Each new unexpected chance happens at the very moment when the author has need of it." *

The reader may ask what reason there can be for this persistent and pitiless attack. The Book, as has been said, does not contain the record of a single miracle. It does, indeed, record a marvellous providence. But that is left for the reader to discover: it is not thrust upon his notice by a single hint or word. God is not once named in the Book, and it would be hard indeed to say how a book could be written that should give less offence to rationalistic prejudices. Whence, then, comes this undying hostility? Why should the critical batteries rain their shot and shell upon this specially unoffending part of the Scripture? A little reflection will discover the critical strategy. This is supposed to be a weak portion of the Biblical wall. It is one, too, which, it is imagined, few will strenuously defend. Multitudes will ask, like Lot,

* *Histoire littéraire de l'Ancien Testament.*

“Is it not a little one?” “What does it matter if Esther is given up? What Christian doctrine will suffer?” In calculating upon the help of such men, the critics do not deceive themselves. They are always with us; and the critics know—what is hid from these—that every Christian doctrine will suffer. If a fictitious Book was ever admitted among “THE ORACLES OF GOD,” there could have been no Divine selection, and no handing over of the Books which were to be preserved to the high-priest of the time by God, through His servants, the prophets. In other words, the Canon would be proved to be a myth. Doubt would thus be cast upon the whole Bible, and the foundation of every Christian doctrine would be shattered to atoms. No man would ever be able to support even the most momentous of them all by one “Thus saith the Lord.” That is the anarchy which the critics and their sympathisers call freedom. It is the goal of all their striving. And hence this storm which spends its fury upon the Book of Esther. Once that Book is down, the hordes of unbelief will pour into our Holy City, and tread it under foot.

CHAPTER II.

AHASUERUS IS XERXES.

I HAVE elsewhere explained the absence of the name of God in the Book of Esther and its striking silence in regard to prayer and to praise.* That silence, too complete and too well sustained to be without a definite purpose, becomes a striking demonstration of the inspiration of this portion of Scripture. I have there also dealt with the objections to the Book, and with the reply which has been so marvellously furnished. These objections, however, come specially within the scope of *The Guide*, and a fresh statement of the replies, which become ever fuller as the years roll on, will now be given.

The older commentators had practically despaired of our ever being able to say with certainty with what Persian king the husband of Esther was to be identified. One said: "Which of them it was is not yet agreed, nor is it of any necessity for us now to know."† And, indeed, if there was any comfort in that reflection, it was greatly needed. The pitiable uncertainty of the learned may be gathered from the following by another learned commentator: "Who he" (Ahasuerus) "was is not easy to say; almost all the kings of Persia are so named by one or another

* *The Inspiration and Accuracy of the Holy Scriptures* (Marshall Brothers).

† Matthew Poole,

writer. . . . According to Bishop Usher this was Darius Hystaspis. . . Dr. Prideaux thinks Ahasuerus was Artaxerxes Longimanus, which is the sense of Josephus. . . . Capellus is of opinion that Darius Ochus is meant, to which Bishop Patrick inclines; but I rather think with Vitranga and others, that Xerxes is the Ahasuerus that was the husband of Esther here spoken of."*

From this uncertainty and unconcern the rationalistic objections effectually roused commentators and students. Scaliger, in a work published in 1598, held that Ahasuerus was Xerxes. He was led to this conclusion, however, not only by the agreement of the Scripture statements with the character and history of that monarch, but also with the apparent resemblance between the name of Esther and that of Amestris, who, Herodotus tells us, was the queen of Xerxes. This identification of Ahasuerus with the son of Darius Hystaspis and father of Artaxerxes approved itself increasingly as the statements of the Book were more carefully weighed. But a new science was about to emerge, which was to recall the distant past and to make the politics and the personages of those vanished ages as real to us as the politics and the personages of to-day. And, strange to say, the very first step, which was taken by this infant science, shed a light upon this point which ended our uncertainty, and gave us an earnest of the striking confirmations of the Scripture that were to follow.

To quite explain this matter, I must ask the reader

* Dr. Gill.



STAIRCASE AND PART OF THE PALACE OF PERSEPOLIS (from *The Ancient Universal History*).

to accompany me for a moment or two elsewhere. Nearly three centuries ago, a Roman gentleman, named Pietro della Valle, saw in Persia some remarkable ruins, the account of which created considerable interest. He mentioned the fact that the ruins were covered in some places with inscriptions, the letters of which he described as having a "pyramidal" character. Those little pyramids, sometimes perpendicular, sometimes horizontal, and sometimes slanted, interested him greatly. Accounts were published later by Sir John Chardin and M. le Brun. As an indication of the deep impression providentially made by these accounts, I may say that that large literary venture, *The Universal History*, described in the letters patent issued by George II. as "a work hitherto attempted in vain by other nations," and published in 1747, and which is not what would be described as an illustrated work, contains thirty-two plates, many of them of great size, to illustrate the ruins, sculptures, and inscriptions. "The plain," it says, "in which this famous city stood, is one of the finest in Persia, and, indeed, in all the East. Its length is eighteen or nineteen leagues; its breadth in some places two, in others four, and, in some, six. It is watered by the great river *Araxes*, or *Bendemir*, and by a multitude of rivulets besides. Within the compass of this plain there are between a thousand and fifteen hundred villages, without reckoning those in the mountains, all adorned with pleasant gardens and planted with shady trees. The entrance of this plain on the west side has received as much grandeur

from nature as the city it covers could do from industry or art. It consists of a range of mountains, steep and high, four leagues in length, and about two miles broad, forming two flat banks, with a rising terrace in the middle, the summit of which is perfectly plain and even, all of native rock.

“In this there are such openings, and the terraces are so fine, and so even, that one would be tempted to think the whole a work of art, if the great extent and prodigious elevation thereof did not convince one, that it is a wonder too great for aught but nature to produce. Undoubtedly, these banks were the very places where the advanced guards from Persepolis took post, and from which Alexander found it difficult to dislodge them.” The writer then proceeds to give an equally detailed account of the city itself.* The ruins were afterwards visited by Carstens Niebuhr, the father of Niebuhr, the German historian. This latter traveller published an account of his travels in two volumes, which made his readers as deeply interested in the ruins and their inscriptions as he himself had been. Fortunately, it was known that these ruins were the remains of the ancient Persepolis, a favourite city of the Persian kings, which had been burned down by Alexander the Great. The remains were a revelation to Europe of the splendour of the ancient arts. Della Valle spoke of the huge marble blocks which retain their exquisite polish to the present hour. A vast platform had first of all been constructed of solid stone. Many of the blocks are

* Vol. v., pp. 98, 99.



PORTALS ON THE WEST SIDE OF THE ROYAL PALACE OF PERSEPOLIS.

from forty-nine to fifty-five feet long, and from six to ten feet broad.

Of the arrangement of the buildings, of the massive staircases by which the platform was ascended from the plain, which are almost perfectly preserved to the present day, and of the beauty of the pillars, a few of which were still standing, I shall not speak.* We are specially concerned just now with those pyramidal letters of which Della Valle wrote. Niebuhr had made careful copies of these, and the inscriptions which he reproduced were scanned by many eager eyes. The difficulties, however, were seen to be immense, and they were really greater than scholars then knew. But the problem was not laid aside. With a persistency, which is one of the most striking features in this long and intense toil, some of the most distinguished scholars in Europe brought their learning and ingenuity to bear upon the inscriptions of Persepolis. As Joachim Menant has said: "A man's life was given for each letter of this ancient alphabet."† One writer pointed out that there were three kinds of writing upon the monuments: one that seemed to be the simplest; a second that was briefer and more difficult; and a third that was still briefer and still more difficult. This prevented the confusion which would have followed had scholars attempted to read the inscriptions right on. Another writer showed that the writing was to be read from left to right, like our own. A third suggested that one of the wedge-like

* See Rawlinson, *The Five Great Monarchies*, vol. ii., p. 237, etc.

† *Les 'Ecritures Cunéiformes*, p. 51.



A PILASTER OF A PORTAL AT PERSEPOLIS.

characters which was always drawn in the same direction, and which occurred after every six or more letters was really a mark (like the old Roman dot or period) which separated the words and showed how many letters were in each.

The reader will be introduced to this and other characters immediately. I wish him now merely to note how slowly and yet how thoroughly all this preliminary work was done. The scholars were not, however, to reap the first fruits of the great harvest. That honour fell to one who had few pretensions to an equal place with them. Georg Friedrich Grotefend, a young student at the University of Göttingen, had his attention directed to the subject through a conversation with the librarian. Books were supplied to him, and all that was already done was explained. He studied carefully the copies of the inscriptions, and finally fixed upon two. These two were brief, and they had the peculiarity that some words which were in one were reproduced in the other. Later inscriptions had shown that the royal titles ran in this fashion: A, GREAT KING, KING OF KINGS, SON OF B, GREAT KING, KING OF KINGS. It seemed to him that these phrases, "great king," "king of kings" were repeated in the second inscription. On looking still more narrowly at these texts, he found that the name which I have indicated by B was repeated in the second. One can imagine with what a heart-leap he recognised that he had here found a series of *three* names—which were names of father, son, and grandson. For the second inscription seemed to run:

[illegible]

INSCRIPTION AND SCULPTURE ON THE WEST SIDE OF THE STAIR-CASE AT PERSEPOLIS.

the inscriptions showed that the names were not the same. This shut Grotefend up, then, to the other three, Xerxes, Darius, and Hystaspis, the father of Darius, who was a noble, but not a king.

It is now time that we also should note the inscription to which Grotefend first applied his attempted decipherment. I have reproduced it on the preceding page.

Some notion of the Persian forms of the names was got, with the result that Grotefend was fully convinced that he had begun the solution of the great problem. The reader will observe the slanting letter, formed of one wedge, which divides the words from each other. It is over the small asterisk *. It occurs twice in the first line, twice in each of the next two, and three times in the fourth line. It may interest the reader to note, for example, the sign for the letter A. It is found at the end of the second line. But our attention is directed now to the first word in the inscription. When that was deciphered, the question regarding the Book of Esther was practically settled. Grotefend knew that this must be the ancient Persian form of the name Xerxes. But the Greek form of the name of the son of Darius had long concealed an important fact; for here, with the exception of the first letter *a*, Xerxes became letter for letter the Hebrew *Ahasuerus*, or *Akhashverosh*! The Persian name was *Khshayarsha*, which in Greek became *Xerxes*.

This reading has long since been placed beyond the reach of doubt. Indeed, it was soon confirmed

by another fortunate discovery. An alabaster vase was found in Egypt which had an inscription on it written in four languages, one of them in Egyptian



THE NAME OF XERXES IN EGYPTIAN WRITING UPON
AN ANCIENT VASE.

hieroglyphics. Champollion recognised in this last the name of Xerxes. In the top line was the very

name which Grotefend had previously deciphered.

This line of the inscription is in Persian; the second line of the cuneiform writing at the top of the vase is in the Susian language; the third line gives the name in Assyrian. Beneath these three lines in the wedge-shaped character, the reader will mark the now familiar figures of the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics. These are marked off by a line surrounding the figures. This is the usual oval which encircles a royal name. This part of the inscription is arranged at the top of our engraving, where beneath each character will be found its value in the letters of our own alphabet. The *s* with the curve above it (*š*) is equal to our *sh*. The whole name *Khsh-yar-sha* is, with the addition of the letter *a*, with which the Hebrews always began such words, letter for letter, the Ahasuerus of the Hebrew Bible. Fragments of four similar vases were found by Loftus at Susa, and are now in the British Museum. That shown in our illustration is preserved in the Cabinet des Médailles in Paris. How much depended upon that identification of Ahasuerus with Xerxes, which was thus placed beyond the possibility of doubt, we shall now see.

CHAPTER III.

ESTHER AND HISTORY.

THE identification of Ahasuerus with Xerxes enables us to date the events, and to see that Esther occupies its proper place in the series of the Historical Books of Scripture. Xerxes reigned from 485 to 465 B.C., and we have thus a view afforded us of the Jews who remained in Babylonia after the way had been opened for their return to Palestine. It was only bitter and unremitting persecution which had made Israel of old leave Egypt. That was the sole reason (so far as the will of the Israelites was concerned) of the completeness of the Exodus, and that they left not a hoof behind. In Persia, on the contrary, they prospered; and, if they were not held in honour, they at least dwelt in security. The contentment of the vast majority with their lot in the land of the captivity enables us to understand the words of Ezra, which tell us (i. 5) that "all whose spirit God had raised" went up to build the house of God, which is at Jerusalem.

Another and more momentous consequence of the discovery was that the objections as to the "improbabilities" and "impossibilities" of the Book vanished like darkness before the light. It was all along felt that, however impossible it might be to make such a history accord with what was known of

ordinary monarchs, it bore the stamp of Xerxes on its every feature. "In personal beauty and stately bearing," writes Mr. Philip Smith,* "he was the fairest among the many myriads he gathered for the expedition against Greece; but in all else he proved how a noble race might be corrupted in one generation by the training of the Seraglio. Vain and fickle, blinded by conceit and passion, and jealous of good advice, he was such a leader as the Greeks might have desired to be set over their enemies." "The character of Xerxes," writes Canon Rawlinson, "falls below that of any preceding monarch. Excepting that he was not wholly devoid of a certain magnanimity, which made him listen patiently to those who gave him unpalatable advice, and which prevented him from exacting vengeance on some occasions, he had scarcely a trait whereon the mind can rest with any satisfaction. Weak and easily led, puerile in his gusts of passion, and his complete abandonment of himself to them—selfish, fickle, boastful, cruel, superstitious, licentious—he exhibits to us the Oriental despot in the most contemptible of all his aspects—that wherein the moral and the intellectual qualities are equally in defect, and the career is one unvarying course of vice and folly." †

It seems clear, however, that the impression made upon the mind of antiquity by the personality and the career of Xerxes was of a higher order. Herodotus and Plutarch, for example, present us with a more flattering picture. The former, in words made

* *Ancient History*, vol. i., p. 403. † *Ancient Monarchies*, vol. ii., p. 485.

use of by Mr. Smith, says, after informing us that the Persian army numbered more than five millions : "Amongst all these myriads of men, with respect to grace and dignity of person, no one better deserved the supreme command than Xerxes himself." He seems to have been, like our own Henry the Eighth and many another strong-willed personage, "every inch a king." Xerxes, as he comes before us in history, seems to have had the will of a god. Nothing was impossible. How was his vast army to cross the Hellespont—those seven furlongs of a restless, and often tempestuous, sea? Xerxes' reply was to throw two solid bridges across it, and thus practically to extend the land from shore to shore. "The bridges were contrived," says Mitford, "one to resist the current, which is always strong from the Propontis, the other to withstand the winds, which are often violent from the Aegean Sea; so that each protected the other."* Ancient sailors dreaded the doubling of the Cape of Athos. Xerxes decreed that the necessity for doubling the Cape should cease. His ships would go overland, just as his soldiers marched across the sea. A huge canal was dug across the isthmus, an undertaking so vast that it has been declared by many to be impossible. These things made an immense impression upon the ancient world. The unbounded resources, the gigantic notions, and the imperious will, of Xerxes made the name of Persia one of terror to the ancient world; and these have to enter into the picture, as well as his fickleness, vanity,

* *History of Greece*, vol. ii., p. 94.

and passion. But when the picture has been thus completed, what have we got? It is, in every detail, the very Ahasuerus of the Bible! Mark, too, that the Book of Esther takes us to entirely different scenes from those presented in the history of the times. In the Bible we have Xerxes at home. The Scripture presents not one scene in common with Herodotus, or with any other ancient writer. To have pictured the same man on an entirely different field was a task utterly impossible to any fiction that has ever been, or that ever can be, written. To have given us this unique personality, this living picture, required an absolutely truthful and exact history. Nöldeke's verdict, that the Book has not even "a historical kernel," is left a monument of critical folly. No man with the slightest historical faculty can fail to see that every fibre of the Book is truth, and that it is radiant with insight from its first line to its last.

The identification of Ahasuerus with Xerxes has brought the statements of Scripture into full accord with history. The king is described in the first verse as that "Ahasuerus who reigned from India even unto Ethiopia, over a hundred and seven and twenty provinces." Herodotus (iv. 44) tells us that Darius, the father of Xerxes, "subdued the Indians." He says also that "the Indians, the most numerous nation of whom we have any knowledge . . . formed the twentieth satrapy" under Darius, "and furnished six hundred talents in golden ingots" (iii. 94). After saying that the Persians were not compelled by Darius to pay any specific taxes, but presented a free-

will offering, he continues: "The Ethiopians, who border upon Egypt, subdued by Cambyses in his expedition against the Ethiopian Macrobian, are similarly circumstanced" (97). The Ethiopians, therefore, also formed part of the Persian empire under Xerxes. And, had there been any doubt left in regard to this matter, it would be dispelled by the following passages from the description by Herodotus of the army which Xerxes marched into Greece. This proves that the widely extended empire was no fiction. "The dress of the Indians," he says, "was cotton: their bows were made of reeds, as were also their arrows, which were pointed with iron. Their leader was Pharnazathres, son of Artabates."* "Arsanes, son of Darius by Aristone, a daughter of Cyrus, commanded the Arabians and the Ethiopians who came from beyond Egypt. . . . Those Ethiopians who came from the most eastern parts of their country (for there were two distinct bodies in this expedition) served with the Indians. These differed from the former in nothing but their language and their hair."† These were, therefore, the very limits, on the extreme east and the extreme west, of the empire of Xerxes.

The dates also enable us to fill up the story of Xerxes. We are told that "in the third year of his reign he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces being before him" (i. 3). Does anything hang upon this "third year" that it is so specially noted? And was there any

* VII. 65. † 69, 70.

reason of State for the summoning and for the long continuance of this great national Council or Parliament? The answer to these questions brings us to the great event of the reign of Xerxes, and that which has perpetuated his fame. During the reign of Darius his father, the Persians had suffered a disastrous defeat on the plains of Marathon. Darius set himself to organise an invasion of such proportions as would bid defiance to any resistance the Greeks might make. He died just as he was about to commence the campaign. The task was thus inherited by Xerxes; and when, in his second year the rebellion of Egypt had been subdued, attention was concentrated upon the Grecian expedition.

It was a stupendous undertaking. Repeated defeats had convinced the Persians that in the Greeks they had no ordinary foes, and that the seas by which their isles were surrounded made an invasion peculiarly perilous. Herodotus tells us that "in the year which followed the death of Darius," that is, in Xerxes' second year, the Persian king "subdued . . . the whole of Egypt, so that it was more effectually reduced than it had been by Darius." "After the subjection of Egypt," he continues, "Xerxes prepared to lead an army against Athens; but first of all he called an assembly of the principal Persians to hear their sentiments, and to deliver without reserve his own." Herodotus pretends to report the speeches which were delivered, but his account plainly implies that the assembly continued in session for some time, until a decision was finally reached, in which all the Persians

were united. He says that Xerxes, as the time went on, had a number of visions (vii. 12-19). "Xerxes," he says, "saw a third vision. The magi, to whom it was related, were of opinion that it portended to Xerxes' unlimited and universal empire. The king conceived himself to be crowned with a wreath of an olive tree, whose branches covered all the earth, but that this wreath suddenly and totally disappeared. After the above interpretation of the magi had been made known in the national assembly of the Persians, the governors departed to their several provinces, eager to execute the commands they had received, in expectation of the promised reward."

This prolonged consultation was in exact accord with the customs of the times. Speaking of Cyrus, Lenormant says: "It was by free deliberation in a real national assembly that he was elected king. Even in later times, when the Persian empire was at its greatest height of glory and power, there still remained something of these ancient forms of this spirit of independence and liberty. The nature of the government and the authority of the great king were very different in the provinces from what they were in Persia itself. Although elsewhere he was the typical Asiatic sovereign, absolute, uncontrolled, almost divine; in Persia, the king was only the chief of a free people. . . . It was their warlike legions, with the hardy habits of mountaineers, which constituted the chief strength of the armies of the king; but he was unable to march them absolutely at his own caprice—the Persian nation had to decide

upon the propriety of the war. On these solemn occasions the king, whose word was law to all the other nations beneath his sceptre, assembled around him, before taking his resolution, a real parliament, composed of the chiefs and principal men among the Persians, who were looked on almost as his equals. It is thus that Herodotus, always well informed, records that the declaration of war by Darius against the Greeks was preceded by a careful deliberation in the royal parliament, in which everyone expressed his opinion with entire freedom. And this fact was so well known in Greece, that a celebrated painted vase in the Museum at Naples represents, with the names of the personages, the scene of this deliberation.”*

Here we have another illustration of how circumscribed the learning often is which dares to condemn the Bible. Davidson says under the heading “HISTORICAL IMPROBABILITIES”: “Ahasuerus keeps a feast for half-a-year, assembling about him all his princes, nobles, and satraps, and thus leaving their provinces without a proper government.” But here Herodotus tells us that “the governors departed to their several provinces.” *They, therefore, had been at Susa.* Davidson mixes up, in this objection, which has been part of the critics’ stock-in-trade from the days of Eichhorn to the present time, two things—(1) the fact of the assembly, and (2) its duration. But of the fact there can, in the face of this explicit testimony by Herodotus, be no manner of doubt in the mind of any man who loyally accepts unbiassed

* *Manual of the Ancient History of the East*, vol. ii., pp. 60, 61.

and competent evidence. But this is Davidson's and the critics' principal objection to Esther. Davidson puts it first. If he knew that this passage was in Herodotus, then we are reduced to the painful necessity of questioning his honesty. For he makes no reference to it whatever. But let me repeat that, in the face of the testimony quoted above, the Persian Parliament was an absolute fact. There took place, in the third year of Xerxes, what Herodotus calls, "the National Assembly of the Persians." Despite, therefore, what Davidson says about their "thus leaving their provinces without a proper government," the Governors were actually there; for Herodotus says that, at the close of the Assembly, "the Governors departed to their several provinces," a thing which they could scarcely have done, unless they had previously left their provinces to come to Susa.

It need hardly be remarked that the organisation of the provinces was too elaborate to permit them to be "without a proper government" in the temporary absence of their Governors. That reflection naturally occurs to any fair-minded man. And, as to the time to which the conference extended, is it to be imagined that men would have been brought from the extremities of the earth—and in those days, too, of comparatively slow travel—merely to meet and to separate again? The fact that they were personally summoned, and that directions were not sent to them instead, indicated that not a hurried meeting but a prolonged Conference was necessary. Herodotus tells us that, first of all, the question had to be debated as to whether the

expedition should be made. Whether such a debate took place or not, we can understand that it was a necessity, in such a gigantic enterprise, to arouse the enthusiasm, and so secure the ardent co-operation of the whole empire. Then, when this was accomplished, arrangements had to be made as to the men to be furnished by each province; the proportion of horse and foot, bowmen and spearmen, of which the contingent should consist; the provisions to be supplied along the course of the army's march; the places and the times at which these were to be deposited; when each contingent was to set out; the officers who were to command them, and a host of other details, which necessarily required frequent conferences. It was only when all these points had been fully considered, and when all arrangements had been elaborated by the prolonged consideration of the best minds in the empire, that they could be placed in their entirety before the king and his special advisers. This entailed further time before the arrangements could receive the royal approval, and be issued as decrees. That time was actually taken for such deliberations, and that the arrangements had been finally revised and issued as royal decrees, is also plainly seen in the statement of Herodotus, that "the Governors departed to their several provinces, eager to execute *the commands they had received.*"

The second "historical improbability," on the strength of which the higher criticism has denied even the truth of Esther, is the length of the interval between the divorce of Vashti and the marriage of

Xerxes with Esther. That divorce takes place in the third year of his reign, and the marriage is delayed to the seventh year. This objection places the critical case against the Bible in a still more lamentable light. The decree to select the maidens was issued in the third year of Xerxes. The Scriptures tell us that the harem preparations occupied "twelve months" (ii. 12). This brings us to the fourth year of the king's reign. By this time Xerxes had set out for Greece. He set out from Sardis, on his return to Susa, in the end of 479, *the seventh year of his reign*. The Scripture says that "Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus into his house royal *in the tenth month*, which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign" (ii. 16). This was in the month of January, following Xerxes' return. Here the coincidence is exact; and the Scripture, keeping to the story it has to tell, and saying nothing whatever of the Grecian campaign, nevertheless keeps step, with absolute exactness, with the events and circumstances of the time. Agreement like this reveals the fulness of knowledge and the undeviating truthfulness that have passed like life-blood into every phrase and word of the Bible, and that have made it the unique and peerless Book that it is. There is but one such Book in the entire literature of humanity.

CHAPTER IV.

“SHUSHAN THE PALACE.”

THERE have been significant changes in the critical attack upon this and other portions of Scripture. The reader has already remarked De Wette's judgment, that Esther contained “many errors in regard to Persian manners.” But even then, before the investigations had begun which have brought back so much of that ancient past, he was constrained to add the words—“as well as just references to them.” We can measure the advance that has been made by placing by the side of these words the following from Dr. Driver: “On the other hand, the writer shows himself well informed on Persian manners and institutions; he does not commit anachronisms such as occur in Tobit or Judith; and the character of Xerxes as drawn by him is in agreement with history.”* But it is significant of the tremendous issues of this conflict that, though former verdicts are reversed, the Scripture is not re-instated. Dr. Driver's attitude towards Esther is essentially the same as that of Dr. De Wette. Faith is a grace, a sacred trust. It is the birthright portion in God's kingdom. Once scorned and cast away, it may be sought with tears and yet not be found. Such has been the experience of

* *Introduction*, p. 453.

multitudes. May God grant that it be not the fate of our country!

We shall now apply the test of fact to the prevalent theory regarding the late origin of the Book. Dr. Driver places it about 200 years after the events.* Others bring the date of its composition still lower. The advantage of this, from the critical point of view, is, that it is then impossible to regard the Book as the inspired Word of God or as history. It is mere tradition—a collection of coloured representations, exaggerations, mistakes, distortions, and fabrications. The critics in this way attain the freedom, which is the goal towards which they are now hurrying forward the English-speaking race—freedom for unbelief to treat the Bible as it likes—freedom for everyone but for him who will hold it forth as the Word of eternal life.

But in this Book we hear the accent of certainty so peculiar to the Bible. It possesses that strange power also of placing us in direct contact with scenes and persons, so that we are made spectators, and not merely readers or listeners. Are we in contact, then, with fact, or with the painted imagery of fiction? The feast, we are told, is celebrated at "Shushan the Palace;" and this is plainly assumed to be the residence of Xerxes. He is there when the story opens. He is there also when Esther is wedded, and when Haman's intrigue is in progress. Is it a matter of fact, then, that this city was the residence of the Persian king? That is one of those facts which

* Page 454.

would soon be lost sight of when the Persian dominion ended, and when, under the Greek dominion, Susa was neglected, and other cities had long impressed the popular imagination as residences of kings. But the answer to our question is clear and decided. Susa was the abode of Xerxes. Herodotus is giving an account of the distance from Sardis of what he calls "the royal residence of Memnon," and in the same paragraph he explains that the city of Memnon is Susa.* It was, therefore, in his day, what it had been before, the residence of the Persian kings. In another passage he tells us that two Persian generals carried some captive Eretrians to Darius at Susa. It was consequently the residence of Xerxes' father.† In another place we read: "The Athenians upon some occasion or other sent ambassadors to Susa, the city of Memnon, amongst whom was Callias, the son of Hipponicas: at the same place and time some Argives were present to inquire of Artaxerxes, the son of Xerxes, whether the friendship they had formed with his father Xerxes continued still in force."‡ Susa was also the residence, therefore, of Xerxes' son. Some Greeks from Thessaly came to Xerxes to implore him to invade Greece. They came to Susa,§ so that Susa was the residence of Xerxes himself. Speaking of Darius, the father of Xerxes, Canon Rawlinson says: "Darius had proceeded to the seat of Government, which appears at this time to have been Susa. He had perhaps already built there the great

* V. 54. † VI. 119. ‡ VII. 151. § VII. 6.

palace, whose remains have been recently disinterred by English enterprise; or he may have wished to superintend the work of construction. Susa, which was certainly from henceforth the main Persian capital, possessed advantages over almost any other site. Its climate was softer than that of Ecbatana and Persepolis, less sultry than that of Babylon. Its position was convenient for communicating both with the East and with the West. Its people were plastic, and probably more yielding and submissive than the Medes or the Persians." *

In this matter, then, there is no trace of tradition. The Bible is accurate even in the form of the name. Sayce writes: "The Elamite kings, whose capital was at Susa, entitle themselves lords 'of the kingdom of Anzan, kings of Shushan.'" † But the epithet, with which the name is always accompanied, shows with what full knowledge of the place and time the Book is written. The phrase used is "Shushan the Palace," or rather "Shushan the Fortress." *Birah*, the word employed in the original, seems to be ancient Persian, and to be closely allied to other words in that tongue which point to the meaning, "a fortified place." The full force of this description will be seen when we deal by-and-bye with the recent discoveries which have brought to the light of day the palace of Xerxes and of Esther. Meanwhile, it is enough to note that there were *two* Shusans. The royal residence, covering an immense space, was at some distance from the city, and was strongly fortified.

* *Ancient Monarchies*, vol. ii., p. 442.

† *The Higher Criticism*, etc., p. 516.

COURT OF THE HOUSE OF THE WOMEN, IN THE PALACE AT TEHERAN.



These two are carefully distinguished. We read of "the city Shushan," when the ordinary inhabitants are referred to; "the city Shushan was perplexed" (iii. 15); "the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad" (viii. 15). The royal residence, on the other hand, is invariably spoken of as *Shushan hab-birah*, "Shushan the Fortress."

So much for the place of the gathering and of the festival. In describing the arrangements for the concluding festivities, we are told that these were held "in the court of the garden of the king's palace." It is clearly implied that this "court of the garden" had been constructed with a view to such an occasional use as this. The hangings were "fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and pillars of marble." It can hardly be supposed that the pillars of marble were brought together and set up for this special seven days' festival. Was it part, then, of palace arrangements in ancient Persia to have the open courts planted with pillars ready to be used in this way? I may say that the recognition of this fact has been one of the surprises furnished by the researches which have restored to the world a knowledge of ancient Persian architecture. When the ruins of Persepolis were studied upon the spot, it was seen that, while pillars were still standing, and the ground were strewn with fragments of others, there was not a solitary trace of any roof throughout a vast space. There were no fragments adhering to the tops of the pillars that were still erect, and there were none upon the ground below. "Among

the ruins remaining at Persepolis," says Le Bruyn, "is a court containing many lofty pillars: one may even presume that these columns did not support any architrave, as Sir John Chardin has observed; but we may venture to suppose that a covering of tapestry, or linen, was drawn over them to intercept the perpendicular projection of the sun-beams. It is also probable that the tract of ground where most of the columns stand was originally a court before the palace, like that which was before the king's house at Susa, mentioned in Esther v., and through which a flow of fresh air was admitted into the apartments."

I shall refer to the exploration of Susa shortly; but, meanwhile, the following from the pen of Mr. Loftus, who discovered the hall of columns at Susa, may be cited. He quotes the words: "The king made a feast unto all the people that were present *in Shushan the palace*, both unto great and small, seven days, *in the court of the garden of the king's palace*; where were white, green, and blue hangings, fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and *pillars of marble*: the beds were of gold and silver, upon a pavement of red, and blue, and white, and black, marble" (Esther i. 5, 6). The reader will note the italics by means of which he calls attention to the points which his discovery had illustrated. He says that, if it be admitted that Ahasuerus was Xerxes, "we cannot but regard the edifice in question as the actual building referred to." He continues: "It was here, among the pillars of marble in the court of the garden in Shushan the palace, 'when the heart

of the king was merry with wine,' that the order was given for Queen Vashti to overstep the bounds of Oriental female modesty, and 'show the people and the princes her beauty.' By referring to the plan of the ruins, it will be observed that the position of the great colonnade corresponds with the account above given. It stands on an elevation in the centre of the mound, the remainder of which we may well imagine to have been occupied, after the Persian fashion, with a garden and fountains. Thus the colonnade would represent the 'court of the garden of the king's palace,' with its 'pillars of marble.'" ". . . . I feel persuaded that the outer groups, or porticoes, stood distinct from the central square of columns, or were connected simply by means of curtains. It seems to be to this that reference is made in the 'hangings fastened with cords to silver rings and pillars of marble' at the feast of the royal Ahasuerus. Nothing could be more appropriate than this method at Susa and Persepolis, the spring residences of the Persian monarchs. It must be considered that these columnar halls were the equivalents of the modern throne-rooms, that here all public business was despatched, and that here the king might sit and enjoy the beauties of the landscape. With the rich plains of Susa and Persepolis before him, he could well, after his winter's residence at Babylon, dispense with massive walls, which would only check the warm fragrant breeze from those verdant prairies adorned with the choicest flowers. A massive roof, covering the whole expanse of columns, would be too cold and dismal, whereas

curtains around the central group would serve to admit both light and warmth. Nothing can be conceived better adapted to the climate or the season.”*

CHAPTER V.

THE BRITISH DIGGINGS AT SUSAN.

DARIUS, the father of Xerxes, had chosen Susa, or Shushan—the name by which the city is named upon the Assyrian monuments—and built there a magnificent palace. The reputation which it then enjoyed may be judged by the words which Aristagoras addressed to the king of Sparta, when he wished his help in a revolt against Darius. “Susa,” he said, “where the Persian monarch occasionally resides, and where his treasures are deposited—make yourself master of that city, and you may vie in influence with Jupiter himself!”

About a century and a-half earlier, Assurbanipal, king of Assyria, had invaded Elam. He had previously subdued the country, and placed upon the throne a nominee of his own. In the account of that campaign he mentions Susa. He says: “Assur and Istar have lifted me above my enemies. I have taken the great city of Shushan, the seat of their great divinities, the sanctuary of their oracles.”† But his troubles with that country were not ended. The king of his

* *Chaldaea and Susiana*, pp. 373-375.

† Menant, *Annales du Rois d'Assyrie*, p. 267.

choice threw off his yoke, and the land had to be conquered afresh. Frightful vengeance was taken upon the people, their cities, and their country. He tells now his warriors had burned the huge impenetrable forests of Elam, and continues: "I have dried up their cisterns. During a march of a month and twenty-five days I have ravaged the provinces of the land of Elam. I have covered them with destruction, slavery, and famine. . . . The dust of the city of Shushan, of the city of Madaktu, of the city of Hultemas, and of the rest of their cities, I have carried away to the land of Assyria." *

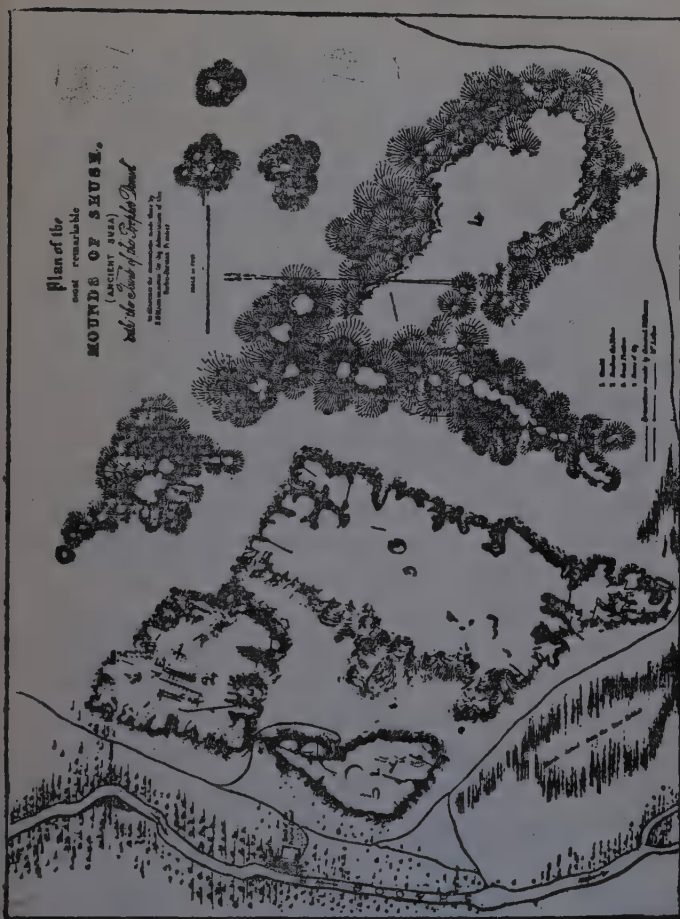
Shushan was plainly the chief city of Elam in the time of Assurbanipal, and one which he had to describe as "the great city of Shushan." The legends of ancient Greece ascribed a huge antiquity to this city, and it is certain that its fame had long extended to these islands of the west. Alexander the Great became its possessor while it still retained its riches and its splendour. It was striven for by his successors, and it became part of the new Parthian empire in 226 A.D. It passed into the hands of the Mahometans in the year 640 of our era; and about half a century afterwards it was deserted, the inhabitants having removed to other towns. When General Williams, the hero of Kars, and Mr. Loftus visited the place, it seemed as if the work of Assurbanipal had been repeated, and that its very dust had been swept away. All that remained was a series of mounds, and it was only in the ravines

* *Ibid*, p. 268.

ploughed out by the winter rains that any trace of ruins could be detected. "At the eastern base of the ruins," writes Mr. Loftus, "stands the (reputed) tomb of Daniel, on the verge of the Sháour, a deep but narrow stream, rising from the plain a few miles on the north, and flowing at a sluggish pace towards its junction with the river of Dizfúl. The area occupied by the ruins covers an extent of ground three and a-half miles in circumference, and, if the numerous small mounds around the great mass be included, spreads over the whole visible plain east of the Sháour."

"The principal existing remains," he continues, "consist of four spacious artificial platforms, distinctly separated from each other. Of these, the western mound is the smallest in superficial extent, but considerably the most lofty and important (numbered 1 on the plan). . . . It is apparently constructed of earth, gravel, and sun-dried brick, sections being exposed in numerous ravines by the rains of winter. . . . From the remarkably commanding position of the great mound, which is called by the people of the country 'the Kál'a' or castle, I have no hesitation in recognising in it the citadel of Susa to which Arrian pointedly alludes in the following passage:— 'When we had sacrificed according to the national custom, and held torch races and athletic games, Alexander appointed Abulites, a Persian, Satrap of Súsiana, gave the command of the garrison (1,000 disabled Macedonian soldiers) in the citadel of Susa, to Mazarus, one of his own staff, and made Archelaus,

son of Theodorus, governor of the city (with 3,000 men); after which he set out to go into Persia.' . . .



4, SITE OF THE CITY SHUSHAN. 2, THE COURT OF THE KING'S PALACE. 3, THE HOUSE OF THE WOMEN AND THE HOUSE OF THE KING. 1, THE CITADEL.

The importance of the citadel, commanding the rest of the city, may be gathered from the fact that he

placed in it the well-trying soldiers who had followed him from his own native kingdom of Macedonia.”*

“It is difficult,” he says, “to conceive a more imposing site than Susa, as it stood in the days of its Kayanian splendour—its great citadel and columnar edifices raising their stately heads above groves of date, konar, and lemon trees—surrounded by rich pastures and golden seas of corn—and backed by the distant snow-clad mountains. Neither Babylon nor Persepolis could compare with Susa in position—watered by her noble rivers, producing crops without irrigation, clothed with grass in spring, and within a moderate journey of a delightful summer clime.”†

Excavations were hindered by the intense fanaticism of the Moslem inhabitants, but were nevertheless pushed forward. General (then Colonel) Williams, after digging in various parts of the citadel mound (marked 1) and discovering nothing, turned his attention to the northern mound (marked 2). He here “observed a small piece of limestone projecting through the soil.” On digging around this, he found the base of a gigantic pillar. He then discovered two others at equal distances of $27\frac{1}{2}$ feet from the centre of one pillar to the centre of the next. “There could be no hesitation in concluding,” says Mr. Loftus, “that Colonel Williams had discovered a palace of the ancient Persian monarchs at Susa, rivalling, if not surpassing, that at Persepolis in grandeur.”‡ Largely on account of the annoyances from the fanatical

* *Chaldæa and Susiana*, pp. 342-344. † *Ibid.*, p. 347.

‡ Page 353.

Moslems, little more was accomplished, and the excavations were for a time abandoned.

£500 having been sent out by Lord Palmerston's government to carry on the exploration, Mr. Loftus returned, and continued the excavations on mound No. 2. After several disappointments in the attempt to discover additional pillars, he succeeded in laying bare five more of the huge pedestals. "I was now satisfied," he says, "that the structure was one of similar description to the so-called Great Hall of Xerxes at Persepolis. Further researches not only confirmed this impression, but proved likewise that, although the two colonnades differed in details, they were erected on the same plan, and with nearly the same measurements. It is, therefore, natural to conclude that they were the designs of the same architect. . . . The Great Hall at Susa," he adds, "consisted of several magnificent groups of columns, together having a frontage of 343 feet 9 inches, and a depth of 244 feet. These groups were arranged into a central phalanx of thirty-six columns (six rows of six each), flanked on the west, north, and east, by an equal number disposed in double rows of six each, and distant from them sixty-four feet two inches."

On the pedestals of four of the columns an inscription was engraved in three languages. This showed that the palace found by Loftus had been built by Artaxerxes Mnemon; and the information which it contains has a special bearing, as we shall afterwards see, upon the controversy regarding the age of *Esther*. M. Oppert, whose translation I now give, says: "The

texts of Artaxerxes Mnemon are much more important: they are all due to Loftus's excavations at Susa. The text of the columns in two copies is of a very high value; it affords the only new historical statement in all the texts, except the Behistun document. We learn that the palace of Susa was burnt under the reign of Artaxerxes I., and restored only by his grandson. During this time the Persian monarchs resided principally at Babylon, and Darius II. died there.

"The great importance of the Artaxerxes' texts results from their giving the genealogy of the Achæmenidæ, and in confirming the statements transmitted to us by the Greeks, which are in direct contradiction with the traditions of the modern Persians." The translation of the inscription is as follows:

Says Artaxerxes, the great king, the king of kings, the king of the land, the king of this wide earth, the son of King Darius, of King Darius the son of King Artaxerxes, of King Artaxerxes the son of King Xerxes, of King Xerxes the son of King Darius, of King Darius the son of Hystaspes, the Achæmenian.

This palace (*apadānum*), Darius, my grandfather, built it. In the time of Artaxerxes, my grandfather, it was burnt by fire. By the grace of Ormazd, Anahita, and Mithra, I made anew this palace. May Ormazd, Anahita, and Mithra protect me from all evil, and may they not attack nor destroy my work.*

* *Records of the Past*, vol. ix., pp. 85, 86.

Little more was accomplished by this first attempt to lay bare the scene of the sorrow and the triumph of Esther and Mordecai. Many years passed, and this was all that was known of the ancient Shushan. But the time came at last when the spade was once more busy in the dust and rubbish of centuries, and the result was another and fuller triumph for the Bible.

CHAPTER VI.

RECOVERY OF SHUSHAN BY THE FRENCH.

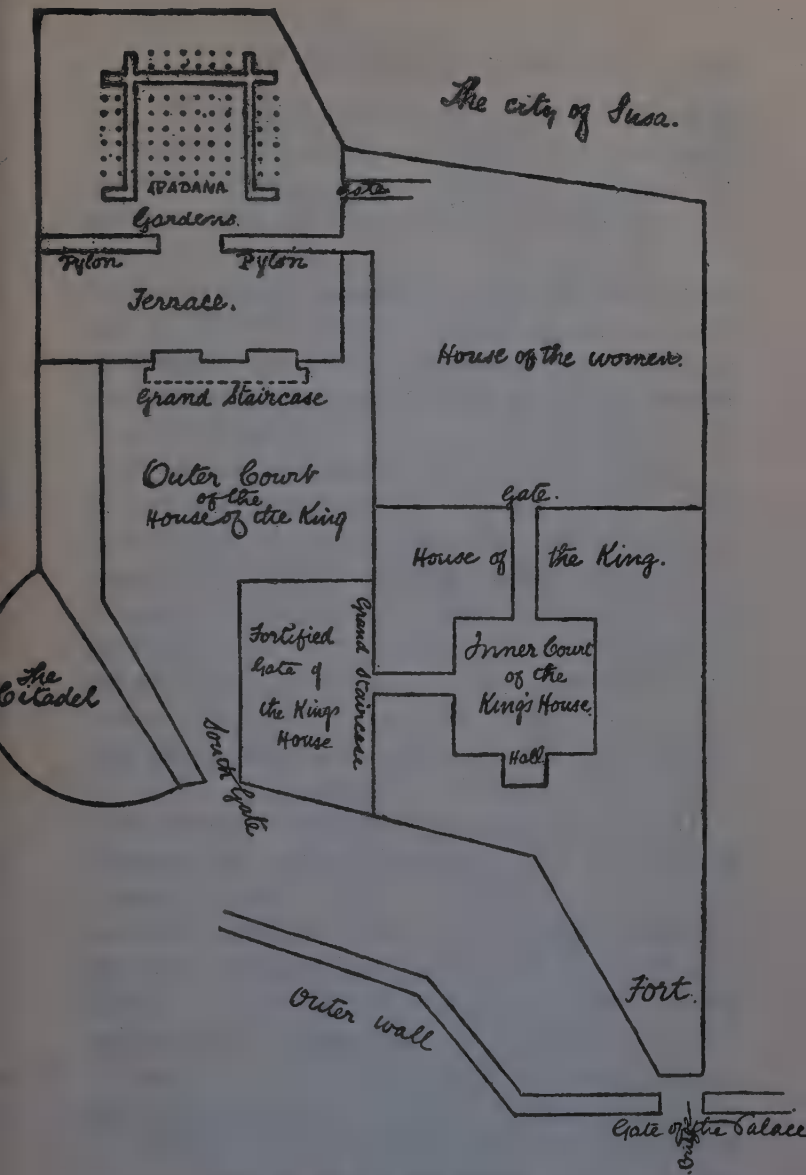
THE British Government has occasionally assisted Oriental research, as in the case of Loftus and of Layard: and when it has done so, laurels have been won which have been a truer glory to us than many of the victories achieved through lavish expenditure of blood and treasure. This makes every lover of our country regret the more keenly that the encouragement of research has depended upon the predilections of individual statesmen, and has never been a settled national policy.

The fruits of the excavation begun by Mr. Loftus were in this way left to be reaped by our French neighbours. Mr. Dieulafoy set out for the now famous ruins along with his wife, who nobly shared his labours and his dangers. Of the results of their memorable discoveries I shall immediately speak; but, meanwhile, it may be said that the mounds of Shush have recently been still more fully explored

with surprising results. The French Minister of Public Instruction sent out to Susa an expedition, with M. J. de Morgan at its head, which conducted researches there from 1897 to 1902. Special facilities, along with a grant of all objects found, were given by the Shah of Persia. Father Scheil has lent his help in the decipherment of the inscriptions. A large assortment of objects has been recovered, and the history of Elam has had light shed upon it, even up to the remotest times. There is one discovery which will excite the lively interest of our readers. It is the discovery of a sepulchre belonging to the very dynasty of Xerxes. In it was a huge sarcophagus of bronze. The skeleton of a female, which fell in pieces when the tomb was opened, is adorned with rich jewellery, the only known specimens which belong to the Persia of the time. The head was decked with "a marvellous torque, the extremities of which are adorned with two heads of lions, of an astonishing kind, two bracelets of massive gold, a collar with pendules, imitating teeth."* The jewellery is delicately engraved, and is enriched with precious stones. There is no inscription to say whose body was thus honoured; but just so may Esther have been laid to rest.

We shall not follow the story of M. Dieulafoy's excavations. It will be enough for our present purpose to note their clearly-established results. No part of the mounds of ruins, which we have already noticed, belonged to the ancient town—"the city Shushan"

* *Revue de l'École d'Anthropologie de Paris*, Juin, 1902, p. 191.



PLAN OF SHUSHAN THE PALACE.

of the Bible. That lay entirely outside their range. The reader will find the site of the town marked on the upper part of the plan (see page 347). The ruins lie on the west of the palace, and the site is marked 4 on the plan. It is to-day merely a series of low mounds, or rather undulations of the soil, some of them scarcely perceptible. The large mounds to the east of these were discovered to be parts of one huge palace. The whole of this raised platform constituted the *Shushan Hab-birah* mentioned in Esther—that is, “Shushan, the Fortress.” This upper city, or Acropolis, covered 123 acres, not measuring the ground taken up by the outer walls. It constituted a formidable fortress, and the defensive works occupied one-tenth of the whole extent of the royal city. It was completely separated from the town, the only means of communication, apparently, being a bridge at the south-east corner. This was defended by a fort. Another gate has since been discovered on the east side. On the west was the citadel.

The reader will note on the east of the citadel, “the house of the king” on the south, and “the house of the women” on the north. These two last groups of buildings formed the chief part of the huge structure. The house of the women communicated with the palace gardens by a gate on the north which is marked on the plan. In these gardens stood another notable part of the structure—the *Apadana*, or *Bithan*, as it is called in Esther. This was an immense pillared hall, covering nearly an acre of ground. It was the great throne-room, and the scene of the

prolonged banquet with the description of which the Book begins. To the south, and fronting the Bithan, are the palace gardens. To the south of these again lay a vast terrace, probably adorned with hanging gardens. From this a grand staircase led down to "the outer court," which communicated by a gateway with the terrace between the walls which in turn led to the bridge which has been already described as the chief means of access to the Palace from without.

Let us now return to the royal apartments. The reader will observe, in the Parade ground, the fortified gate of the king's house. Within, there was another grand staircase of colossal dimensions, leading up to the royal apartments. This led into the passage indicated on the plan, and the passage, again, into "the inner court" of the king's house. The king's house occupies, with the exception of the citadel, the whole of the southern portion of the Acropolis. It is completely separated from the great throne-room, the Apadana, on the north-east. "It contains," says M. Dieulafoy, "a central court bounded on the west by the fortified works of its special gate, on the north by the apartments bordering upon the road separating it from the harem, on the east by other apartments forming part, like those on the north, of the special dwelling of the monarch, on the south by a great hall." To this place were attached apartments for the service of the State, guard-rooms, &c. North of this palace, and entering from it, was the house of the women, a place of huge extent, like a small town. This vast extent was a necessity of the palace

arrangements, as each of the numerous inhabitants of this section had her own apartments and attendants. "It was closed and guarded like a prison; no one was able to penetrate into it with the exception of the chief eunuch, and the eunuchs who were under his orders." The reader will notice that (with the exception of the gate since discovered) it has neither exit nor entrance save from the king's palace and the gardens which surround the Bithan, or throne-room.

Such was the plan of the palace of Xerxes and Esther as it has been restored to us through the persevering labours of M. Dieulafoy and his noble lady. And this plan is in itself a sufficient reply to Professor Nöldeke and the other assailants of the Book. The word *Bithan* occurs in three passages in Esther, and is found nowhere besides in the Bible. The passages referred to are the following: We are told (i. 5) that "the king made a feast . . . in the court of the garden of the king's palace." The phrase in the original is—"in the court of the garden of the *Bithân* of the king." The next place in which the word occurs is vii. 7, where it is said that the king rose from Esther's banquet and "went into the palace garden;" literally—"into the garden of the *Bithân*." The only other passage is in the following verse, where the king is said to have "returned out of the palace garden"—"out of the garden of the *Bithân*." No light was able to be shed upon the meaning of this word, for it has no connection with any term in the Hebrew language. So soon as it was known, however, that it corresponded with the term *Apadana*,

it was impossible to resist the suggestion that Bithan was the corresponding Hebrew term for the Throne-room of the great king. This has now been fully confirmed; and the use of the word in these passages in Esther proves that the author of the Book *must have had before him this very palace*. That conviction was one of the chief results of M. Dieulafoy's investigations. He says that, after two years' work and reflection, "it was impossible not to recognise in the *bithán* of the Bible the Susian *apadana*. Like the *apadana*," he continues, "the *bithán* was sufficiently isolated from the apartments devoted to the Sovereign and to the queens to introduce into it, without inconvenience, a considerable number of men; like the *apadana*, the *bithán* alone of all the buildings of the palace was erected in the midst of a 'paradise,' [or garden planted with trees]. The inner courts of the Susian palaces were too confined and too much shut in by lofty walls to permit the hope of growing trees in them. Entirely different was the situation of the terrace between the south front of the Throne-room and the Pylons"—those masses of building on each side of the gate. "It lent itself marvellously to the planting of those paradises and those hanging gardens which were always in the neighbourhood of the abode of the Great Kings.—Like the gardens of the *apadana*, the gardens of the *bithan* (Esther i. 5; vii. 7, 8) were preceded by an immense vestibule (Esther i. 5) capable of containing all the guests [of Ahasuerus]; like the gardens of the *apadana*, the gardens of the *bithán* were in the immediate neighbourhood of the

harem (Esther vii. 7, 8). Like the *apadana*, the *bithân* was pillared (a fact to be specially noted in Persia), and paved with marble of various colours (Esther i. 6). Last of all, like the *bithân*, it played a special part in the life of the kings of Persia, and in the ceremonial of the court of the Achæmenian monarchs. These are resemblances too striking to be the effect of chance. In addition to this, none of the palaces of Nimrud, of Khorsabad, of Pasargade, of Firouzabad, of Hatra, of Ctesiphon, of Machita, of Rabbath-Ammon, and of Eïvan-Kherkha, any more than those of Persepolis, whether they were constructed under the Assyrians, or the Persians, under the Achæmenians, the Parthians, or the Sassanides, correspond in their entirety to the description given by the Bible of the palace of Ahasuerus." *

That is testimony of the strongest kind. The fact that, of all those recovered Eastern royal abodes of ancient times, this, and this alone, agrees with the references in the Book of Esther is the more striking that this *bithân* was destroyed by fire and passed away from the sight of men not long after the death of Xerxes. And it is only one of several proofs that this very palace lived before the eyes of the author, and that the slightest references of the Book prove its absolutely historical character. The reader has already marked the various parts of this royal city—for no less name can properly describe it. He will find the same plan set before him in the statements of the Book. We have already considered the *apadana*, or

* *L'Acropole de Suse*, p. 376.

bithân. There are two other parts frequently mentioned—"the house of the women," and "the house of the king." These are separate, and are yet adjacent to each other. A glance at the plan of the explored buildings shows the very arrangement to which the words refer. The house of the women, for example, opens into the house of the king. The *bithân* was adorned with "pillars of marble" (Esther i. 6), and was paved with "red and blue and white marble." The words which occur in the Hebrew text, which are rendered "red and blue and white," occur in this place only, and our rendering is largely a venture. The sense to be attached to them is as yet quite unknown. The fact, however, is clear that the pavement was a mosaic. Now, not only have the bases of some of the marble pillars been found, but also the pieces of gray and white marble which formed the pavement. M. Dieulafoy has set up the *bithân* in the museum of the Louvre, where one can now see the remains of the marble pillars, and of the marble pavement, of the hall of the feast. There are other coincidences which will come before us in connection with various incidents of the history; but, even if those now mentioned stood alone, the discoveries would have provided an overwhelming proof of the historical character of the Book. It is significant of the thorough unreliability of the higher criticism that these discoveries were quite within the reach of Professor Nöldeke, had he cared to make himself acquainted with them. It is evident, too, that no one who pretends to judge the claims of the Book could afford to be ignorant of them. Yet he

makes no reference to them, and we are asked to believe that his is the last word of "science" in regard to the matter! The daring and the unscrupulousness of such criticism will yet be amply punished in a repudiation that will sweep them from the high places which they have so long occupied in theological scholarship.

CHAPTER VII

XERXES' FEAST.

IT is with the festal scene in the Apadana that the great drama of *Esther* opens. The account of the prolonged festival contains numerous references to the building, and also to ancient Persian customs, which enable us to mark once more the accuracy of the Book, and to judge that so-called "science" which asks us to cease to regard *Esther* as history, and to treat it as a late, and consequently ignorant, fiction.

We catch the accent of truth in what may seem a very small matter, but which may well detain us a moment—the order in which two words stand in the 3rd verse of the 1st chapter. There we read that Ahasuerus made "a feast unto all his princes and his servants: the power of Persia and Media." In *Daniel*, an earlier Book, which tells us of the founding of the new kingdom, the order in which these two peoples is named is reversed. There it is, "The Medes and the Persians" (*Daniel* v. 28; vi. 8, 12, 15). This

order of the two names in Daniel is constantly observed. The Medes are first named, and then follows the name of their allies. In Esther, the order is equally constant; but now, four reigns after that of Cyrus, the latest reign of which *Daniel* speaks, the Persians are placed first, the Medes second. Had anything occurred in the interval to bring such a change about?

This finds its explanation in the records of the time which are now happily recovered. Cyrus was a man of unsparing generosity and of deep political insight. The union of the Medes and the Persians had carried him to the very summit of earthly power; and he knew that only the closest fellowship of these two dominant races could retain the kingdom which they had won. He, himself a Persian, consequently gave all honour to the Medes. One proof of this preference was their being named first. We have other indications of the honour paid to the Medes in the positions that were accorded to them. Cyrus has, for instance, to put down an insurrection in Sardis, where the Persian governor is besieged, and the newly-made conquest of Lydia is threatened. He detached a force for this service from the main army, and placed at the head of the expedition Mazares, a Mede.* When Mazares died, he was succeeded in the command of the forces in Lydia by Harpagus, another Mede. There was wise policy in this. The Medes had been before the world as the power to whom the fall of Nineveh and of the Assyrian empire had been

*Rawlinson, *Ancient Monarchies*, vol. iv., p. 365.

mainly due. The Persians themselves had been subject to them. Cyrus secured their conquests by still keeping afloat their banner. Their name still awed the surrounding nations, and the hearty co-operation of a brave and spirited people enabled him to extend and to retain his empire.

But when the usurper Smerdis was slain, and Darius, the father of Xerxes, was raised to the throne, the empire seemed to dissolve around him. Insurrections broke out successively on every side, and the new monarch had to spend his early years in the reconquest of the kingdom. After putting down the insurrections in Babylon and in Susiana, "a more important rebellion," writes Rawlinson, "followed. Three of the chief provinces of the Empire—Media, Armenia, and Assyria—revolted in concert. A Median monarch was set up, who called himself Xathrites, and claimed descent from the great Cyaxares; and it would seem that the three countries immediately acknowledged his sway." After testing the strength of the enemy by sending his generals against them, Darius himself took the field, defeated the Median forces, captured their king, and, after mutilating him and exhibiting him chained in this pitiable condition at his palace gate, he had him crucified.* This event modified the relations between the two peoples, though even then it was found impossible to abolish them. The alliance was continued. Darius, in another of the outbreaks with which he had to contend, put an important army of Persians and Medes under the

* *Ibid.*, vol. iv., pp. 409, 410.

command of the Median general, Tachmaspates. The two nations still formed the great body of the army, and their nobles served among the governors and the satraps of the empire; but Persia had now finally asserted her superiority, and took henceforth the unchallenged leadership.

Returning to the Feast of Xerxes, and following the picture as it is unrolled before us by the Scripture, we mark the great state maintained by the king. It is this that seems to be referred to in i. 2, "when he sat upon the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the palace." This is plainly not a figure of speech for his having, as we say, "ascended the throne," or "begun to reign." The words, "which was in Shushan the palace," show that the actual sitting upon the royal throne is meant. The festival began when the king, surrounded by all the pomp and the symbols of his greatness, had taken his place, and seated himself upon the throne. It was that act which, so to say, opened the prolonged banquet. Now, was this state actually observed? Was it a feature of that court at the time, or is this touch due to the fertile imagination of a late writer? The references in the ancient Greek authors, who have left us a picture of the Persian court, prove that here, too, we have a real glimpse of that vanished splendour. Plutarch, in his life of Themistocles, tells us that Xerxes was a spectator of the naval battle of Salamis, which ended so disastrously for his forces. "As soon as it was day," says Plutarch, "Xerxes sat down on an eminence to view the fleet, and its order of battle,

He placed himself, as Phanodemus writes, above the temple of Hercules, where the isle of Salamis is separated from Attica by a narrow frith. . . He was seated on a throne of gold, and had many secretaries about him, whose business it was to write down the particulars of the action."

Royal state seems to have reached the utmost height of its splendour in the great Persian empire. The ancient Greek writers have many references to it which are summarised in the following description : "The king's palace was deemed sacred, and respected as a temple. It was extremely magnificent, and furnished with utensils of inestimable value. The walls and roofs of the rooms were all covered with ivory, silver, amber, or gold. The throne was of pure gold, supported by four pillars richly set with precious stones. The king's bed was likewise of gold; and Herodotus mentions a plane-tree and vine of gold presented to Darius by Pythius, a Lydian, who, after the king of Persia, was accounted the richest man in the world. The body and branches of this vine, says Athenæus, were enriched with jewels of great value; and the clusters of grapes were all precious stones; which hung over the king's head as he sat on the throne. At his bed's head stood always a chest, or coffer, containing 5,000 talents, which was called the king's bolster, and another at his feet, with 3,000 talents. Adjoining to the king's palace were large gardens and parks, stocked with all sorts of game for his diversion. . . . The Persian kings drank no other water but that of the river Choaspes, which was

carried about with them in silver vessels whithersoever they went. They drank only Calybonian wine, made at Damascus, in Syria : and touched no bread but what was of the wheat of Assos, in Phrygia ; and their salt was brought from Egypt. The magnificence of their public feasts exceeded, as appears from holy writ, what we read of in histories of other nations. Their table was daily served with somewhat of the product of each nation subject to them. Among the prisoners taken by Parmenio at Damascus, were, as Athenæus informs us, 277 cooks, twenty-nine who took care of the dishes, seventeen who ministered water, seventy who had in charge the wine, forty employed about ointments, and sixty-six whose province it was to prepare garlands, used, according to the customs of those times, in banquets." *

These banquets were, according to the Scripture, a prominent feature in the life of the Persian court. The great Council of the Satraps and Nobles, which Xerxes convened in his third year to decide upon, and to arrange for, the Grecian campaign, is recorded in *Esther* as a prolonged festival. It concluded with a great and splendid outburst of festivity, surpassing in its extent and magnificence all that had gone before. "In the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants ; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces being before him : when he showed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honour of his excellent majesty many days, even an hundred and fourscore

* *Antient Universal History*, vol. v., pp. 123-125.

days. And when these days were expired, the king made a feast unto all the people that were present in Shushan the palace, both unto great and small, seven days" (Esther i. 3-5).

Is this romance or history? Were these huge hospitalities really customary at the Persian court? "Banquets on an enormous scale," says Professor Rawlinson, "were not uncommon in Persia; and the profuseness and vain-glory of Xerxes would naturally lead him to go to an extreme in this, as in other matters. . . Persian kings, according to Ctesias and Dinu, ordinarily entertained at their table 15,000 persons! This is, of course, an exaggeration; but there can be no doubt that their hospitality was on a scale unexampled in modern times." * These writers add that the royal expenditure on such occasions amounted occasionally to 400 talents. Their accounts at least testify to the impression which this characteristic of the Persian Court had made upon the Greeks. In *Esther*, we have the fact without the huge numbers and the exaggeration of the Greek writers. There is another characteristic of the feast, however, to which our attention is called by the word in the original. This is *mishteh*, literally, "a drinking." It is a word which, while not excluding the consumption of solid food, nevertheless indicates that the main feature of the festival was the consumption of liquor. This species of banquet was a long-established custom among the imperial nations of the East. Speaking of the Babylonians, Professor Rawlinson says: "The diet of the

* *The Pulpit Commentary.*

richer classes was no doubt varied and luxurious. Wheaten bread, meats of various kinds, luscious fruits, fish, game, loaded the board; and wine, imported from abroad, was the usual beverage. The wealthy Babylonians were fond of drinking to excess; their banquets were magnificent, but generally ended in drunkenness; they were not, however, mere scenes of coarse indulgence, but had a certain refinement, which distinguishes them from the riotous drinking-bouts of the less civilised Medes." * Speaking of the Assyrians, he says: "Great banquets seem to have been frequent at the court, as at the courts of Babylon and Persia, in which drinking was practised on a large scale. . . . In the banquet scenes of the sculptures, it is drinking, and not eating, that is represented. Attendants dip the wine-cups into a huge bowl, or vase, which stands on the ground and reaches as high as a man's chest, and carry them full of liquor to the guests, who straightway fall to a carouse." †

Another reference to them is as follows: "We are told that the Medes were very luxurious at their banquets. Besides plain meat and game of different kinds, with the ordinary accompaniments of wine and bread, they were accustomed to place before their guests a vast number of side dishes, together with a great variety of sauces. . . . Wine was drunk both at the meal and afterwards, often in an undue quantity." ‡ And again, referring to the special customs of the Persian Court, he writes: "The

* *Ancient Monarchies*, vol. iii., pp. 450, 451.

† Volume ii., p. 213

‡ Volume iii., pp. 87, 88.

monarch himself rarely dined with his guests. For the most part he was served alone. Sometimes he admitted to his table the queen and two or three of his children. Sometimes, at a 'banquet of wine,' a certain number of privileged boon-companions were received, who drank in the royal presence, not, however, of the same wine, nor on the same terms. The monarch reclined on a couch with golden feet, and sipped the rich wine of Helbon; the guests drank an inferior beverage, seated upon the floor. At a great banquet, it was usual to divide the guests into two classes. Those of lower degree were entertained in an outer court, or chamber, to which the public had access; while such as were of higher rank entered the private apartments and drew near to the king."* Herodotus tells us also that such banquets had an important connection with deliberations of the very kind that were now proceeding at Susa. "Of wine," he says, "they drank profusely.... They are accustomed to deliberate on matters of the highest moment when warm with wine; but whatever they in this situation may determine is again proposed to them on the morrow, in their cooler moments, by the person in whose house they are assembled. If at this time also it meet their approbation, it is executed, otherwise it is rejected. Whatever also they discuss when sober, is always a second time examined after they have been drinking."†

National customs, in the East especially, abide. Sir Henry Rawlinson, in a note on this passage of

*Volume iv., pp. 167, 168.

†Rawlinson's Herodotus, vol. i., note, p. 219.

Herodotus, says that it is still usual for Persians, fond of the pleasures of the table, "to sit for hours before dinner drinking wine, and eating dried fruits, such as filberts, almonds, pistacchio nuts, melon seeds, &c. A party, indeed, often sits down at seven o'clock, and the dinner is not brought in till eleven."* Here we find that the Book of Esther has once more led us back to the times which it professes to describe. There is no shadow of the thought and the customs of a later age, and of a different civilisation. We are face to face with Persia, and that, too, the Persia of Xerxes.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PALACE FURNITURE.

WE read (Esther i. 6) that the beds, or couches, which accommodated the guests, "were of gold and silver." In this, as well as in similar allusions, it might seem as if the language were at least tinged with exaggeration. We are told in the next verse that the very numerous drinking-cups were also made of gold. Even this indicates a profusion of the precious metal which approaches the limits of all that seems to us to be probable. But couches of gold may appear to bear us quite beyond the bounds of probability.

Fortunately, some of that furniture, or of furniture similar to it provided for the camp, was captured in

* Rawlinson's *Herodotus*, vol. i., note, p. 219.

Greece, and has been described by Herodotus. Xerxes had gone back to Persia, but had left his camp furniture with his commander-in-chief, Mardonius. "It is further recorded," says "the father of history," "that when Xerxes fled from Greece, he left all his equipage to Mardonius. Pausanias, seeing this composed of gold, silver, and cloth of the richest embroidery, gave orders to the cooks and domestics to prepare an entertainment for him as for Mardonius. His command was executed, and he beheld couches of gold and silver, tables of the same, and everything that was splendid and magnificent." * The identity of that phrase, "couches of gold and silver," is remarkable. The materials were of the same kind, and had to be described in the same way; and when the reader reflects again that this, if not part of the identical furniture of the Bithan of Susa described in the Scripture, must have been purposely made to resemble it, so that the king might be surrounded with the usual pomp and display in the midst of his army, he will feel that no confirmation could be more complete.

And the statement settles another question. We have representations upon the monuments of Assyrian banquets. There *the guests are seated*, as guests on similar occasions are seated among ourselves. *They do not recline*. Was the custom of the Persians so utterly diverse in this matter, then, from that of the Assyrians? The description of the banquet prepared for Pausanias by the captured attendants of the

Persian general gives us a clear reply. The Greek conqueror saw before him, not seats, but "couches" on which the guests were wont to recline. Here again we have the scene at Susa as described in the Scripture. The alleged improbabilities about the profusion of the precious metals are also swept away. "Pausanias," says Herodotus, "afterwards proclaimed by a herald that no person should touch any of the booty; and he ordered the helots to collect the money into one place. They, as they dispersed themselves over the camp, found tents decorated with gold and silver, couches of the same, goblets, cups, and drinking vessels of gold, besides sacks of gold and silver cauldrons placed on carriages. The dead bodies they stripped of bracelets, chains, and scimitars of gold. . . . Many things of value the helots concealed, and sold them to the Æginetæ. . . . The Æginetæ from this became exceedingly rich; for they purchased gold of the helots at the price of brass." *

Here we have the same astonishing profusion of the precious metals. Herodotus, after telling how the command of Pausanias was obeyed, and the gorgeous spectacle of a Persian banquet was set before him, proceeds to say that Pausanias, "astonished at the spectacle, again with a smile directed his servants to prepare a Lacedemonian repast. When this was ready, the contrast was so striking, that he, laughing, sent for the Greek leaders. When they were assembled, he showed them the two entertainments. 'Men of Greece,' said he, 'I have called you together

to bear testimony to the king of Persia's folly, who forsook all his luxury to plunder us who live in so much poverty.' " Herodotus adds that "in succeeding times, many of the Platæans found on the field of battle chests of gold, silver, and other riches."* Had this feature, then, been absent from the picture so vividly presented in *Esther*, the court of Xerxes would not have been shown to us; and the very astonishment, which we share with the Greeks who won that memorable battle of Platæa, proves that we are looking upon the same things; and that, through the description of the Scripture, we see the very magnificence which amazed the victorious Greeks.

We read also in verse 6 that there "were white, green, and blue hangings, fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and pillars of marble." In the original Hebrew the word which is rendered "green" is *charpas*. This word occurs nowhere besides in the whole of the Old Testament. Our translators, mistaking it for a Hebrew word, gave it the sense of "green." It is, however, an old Persian word, the *carpasa* of the Sanscrit, and was the current name for fine cotton. The word rendered "blue" (*techeleth*) means a blue shade of purple, and the other word (*argaman*) a reddish shade of the same colour. The "fine linen," the Egyptian byssus, was also white; and being of great strength, suited admirably for the cords or ropes on which the awning was suspended. Our attention is turned now, however, more to the colours which are named than to the

* IX., 82, 83.

materials. These are, in each case, white and purple. There is nothing said as to why these colours are named. So silent, indeed, is the Scripture upon this matter, that the writers of the Authorised Version did not note this fact, and gave the translation "green" to the word *charpas*. The writer of *Esther* is plainly describing what attracted any observer's eye in this scene of Oriental splendour, and we have accordingly in this another proof of the historical character of the Book, and of the utterly untrustworthy character of the higher criticism which sets it aside as fable. *For these are the royal colours of Persia.* Xenophon, describing Cyrus's State procession to the Temple of Babylon, says: "After these things, Cyrus himself appeared without the gates with a turban on, that was raised high above his head, with a vest of purple colour half mixed with white; and this mixture of white none else is allowed to wear."* Round this high turban or "tiara, the king wore a purple and white band, or diadem; for nothing else is meant by the word diadem," in the antient writers, but a band of this nature wreathed round the forehead. This tiara, with the purple and white band, is the only ensign of royalty we find among the Persian kings of the first dynasty.†

We find another reference to the place given to these colours in ancient Persia. In viii. 15 we read: "Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white;" that is, of "purple and white." Here, as well as in the materials for

* *Cyropædia* VIII.† *Antient Universal History*, vol. v., p. 121.

the canopy, we again mark the reflection of the time.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CHOICE OF ESTHER.

THE Scripture has taken us to the Persian Court to teach us that, amid the gaieties and the follies, the sadness and the joy, of our little lives, the purposes of God are passing on to their accomplishment. Our estimate of man varies according to our age and mood. At one time, man is everything; at another, he is nothing. In neither estimate do we grasp the truth. Gripped by the compassions of God—remembered by Him—our well-being planned by the Creator, so that God's story is bound up with our story, and with the story of our race—what is nobler, or more worthy of regard, than man? In ourselves we are nothing; but, with God's love resting on us, we are everything.

To write this truth once more upon the hearts of God's people, the story of Esther opens in the king's banqueting house. The Jews in Persia were there largely because they had despised their birthright. They had refused to return to their own land when God had opened the door of their prison-house. And yet He will save them even there; and so He now makes provision for the evil day that is so nigh. While those days of festivity were brightening the

life of Shushan, no one dreamed that they were big with fate for the second personage of the Persian kingdom. But a sudden command is issued by Ahasuerus. The seventh day—the last and the greatest day of the feast—has come. The king is elated. He is “merry with wine.” And in the illusory joy and triumph of the time he asks himself what else can be done to add a fresh splendour to such an immortal moment. The thought flashes up in answer—“they have not seen Vashti!” Let their eyes but rest on her, and that festal scene will never be forgotten as long as they live! But Vashti is queen, and, perhaps, Xerxes remembers, with some shadow of misgiving, that she is not unmindful of what pertains to her dignity. And so no bare request is sent her to show herself to the assembly. He summons the seven Royal Chamberlains, and commissions them to lay the king’s commandment before the queen. She is now herself presiding over a similar assembly; for “Vashti the queen made a feast for the women in the royal house which belonged to king Ahasuerus.” She has but to pass from the one festal chamber to the other, and the seven great officers of State with their attendants are sent off to summon and to escort her.

Meanwhile, there has been a lull in the festive enjoyment and clamour. The news of the coming spectacle has spread rapidly among the guests, and each eye is turned to the approach to the Bithan from the apartments of the women. By-and-bye, the returning procession is marked, and all is eager

expectancy. A thrill runs through the throng when it is seen that no queen is there, and that the great officials approach the throne with manifest marks of fear and apprehension. Vashti has refused to come! For the first time, the authority of the great king has been defied, and he is put to shame before his people. And a moment has been, as it were, chosen for this humiliation which has made it fall with crushing weight!

It says something for the much and loudly condemned Xerxes that he restrains himself. Instead of yielding to a not unnatural outburst of anger, and pronouncing judgment upon the offending queen there and then, he restricts himself to the forms prescribed by law and custom. He turns to the seven counsellors of the throne, "the seven princes of Persia and Media who saw the king's face, and who sat the first in the kingdom," and asked in the hearing of the awed and silent throng: "What shall we do unto the queen Vashti according to law, because she hath not performed the commandment of the king Ahasuerus by the chamberlains" (verses 14, 15)? To this judicial bench the matter had plainly issues that went further than the contempt into which the royal authority might now be brought—an authority that was the bond which then united the nations together, and gave the world peace. This revolt in the king's household threatened the unity and the peace of the home everywhere. We can see in that well-weighed judgment something of what formed the real strength of Persia and of Media among the nations. When

they had said: "If it please the king, let there go a royal commandment from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered, That Vashti come no more before king Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal estate to another that is better than she," "the saying pleased the king and the princes; and the king did according to the word of Memucan" (verses 19, 21).

The counsel of the seven princes stopped there. They said nothing about a successor to Vashti. This



A PERSIAN QUEEN.

was done at a later time, and the suggestion is sadly eloquent of the circle from which it sprang. "After these things," we read, "when the wrath of the king Ahasuerus was appeased, he remembered Vashti, and what she had done, and what was decreed against her." The king's anger was forgotten; and when, in calmer mood, and with returning affection, he remembered her condemnation, he might well have concluded that her punishment had been heavier than her offence. The great officers of the Empire and of the palace

saw danger in these relenting thoughts. *He* might forget the counsel which led to Vashti's disgrace, and who gave it. But Vashti would remember! Her return meant their destruction; and, therefore, it must be prevented by turning the king's interest and affection elsewhere; and in the case of Xerxes this was only too easily accomplished. "The king's servants that ministered unto him"—no doubt the princes and the eunuchs of the Palace—counselled that officers should be appointed to select the fairest maidens in all the provinces for whom accommodation should be found in the house of the women, and that a successor to Vashti should be chosen from among them. The reader knows how Esther was among the number selected, and how the royal choice fell upon her. My aim is not to tell the story, but to ask the reader to note how here also the Scripture has been confirmed; and that, too, in a part where criticism was supposed to be unassailable.

The names of the eunuchs and of the counsellors are given. "On the seventh day," we read, "when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven chamberlains" (eunuchs) to bear his message to Vashti (i. 10). The names of the seven princes are also given. These are "Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan" (ver. 14). These are so clearly Persian in form that they have somewhat shaken the confidence of the critics; for how was it possible that anyone, writing in the year 180 B.C. (when they say

the Book was composed), to be so thoroughly acquainted with Persian names? The Persian dominion had then been buried for 140 years. Every trace of it, and of its language, and its customs had been swept away from Palestine before the flood of Grecian life, and thought, and speech, and customs that had swept over the East. How, then, could the absence of any Greek influence in the record of these names, and the presence of this deeply-impressed Persian character, be accounted for? Nöldeke, after declaring that the Book is destitute of any historical value, finds himself arrested by these names, and by the now ascertained fact that Ahasuerus is the exact Persian for Xerxes. He asks: "Does the narrative rest upon any historical foundation? One cannot," he continues, "reply with certainty. The name *Akhashverosh* seems to indicate that it does. All are agreed to-day in recognising it as identical with Xerxes. It is quite possible," he concludes, "that he admitted into his seraglio a Jewess named Esther, and that he took action in favour of her people." *

In addition, however, to the names, there is the reference to these "seven princes of Persia and Media who saw the king's face, and who sat the first in the kingdom." Were there nobles who possessed these exceptional privileges, and was this the number to which those privileged personages were confined? Herodotus tells us that this was made an institution in the time of Darius, the father of Xerxes. Seven princes, of whom Darius was one, banded themselves

* *Histoire Littéraire.*

together to slay Smerdis the usurper. When he was slain, the question was debated among them whether Persia should be a monarchy or not. Six voted that it should be, and the seventh, Otanes, then amicably withdrew. Having narrated all this, Herodotus continues: "After this, the six took counsel together as to the fairest way of setting up a king: and first with respect to Otanes, they resolved that if any of their own number got the kingdom, Otanes, and his seed after him, should receive year by year, as a mark of special honour, a Median robe, and all such other gifts as are accounted the most honourable in Persia. . . These privileges, therefore, were assigned especially to Otanes. The following were made common to them all: It was to be free to each, whenever he pleased, to enter the palace unannounced." Here we have this special privilege described as exactly as it could be without verbal repetition. The Bible says: "Who saw the king's face;" and Herodotus tells us that the representatives of the seven princes were permitted "to enter the palace unannounced." This is confirmed by the Behistun inscription, in which Darius refers to these princes as "my faithful men"* in the first column, and again in the fourth column in the words: "These are the men who alone were there when I slew Gomates, the Magian, who was called Bardes. These alone are the men who were my assistants." He then names them one by one, and he adds: "Says Darius the king:—Thou who mayest be king hereafter, remember

* *Records of the Past*, vol. 1., p. 115.

to show favour to the descendants of these men." * Xerxes was the son, and the immediate successor, of Darius, and we may be certain that this direction was fully attended to.

Several of the allusions in this chapter recur elsewhere in the Book, and will be noticed further on, Meanwhile, a word may be said as to the identity of Esther. It has been supposed that she is the queen mentioned by the Greek writers under the name of Amestris. This is, so far, by no means certain, and we must wait for further light. But the change which is made in Esther's name when she has entered the house of the women is quite in keeping with Persian customs. Her name was "Hadassah" (ii. 7), which means in Hebrew "myrtle." "Esther" is a Persian word, and means "star." "An ancient usage in the court of Persia," says M. Dieulafoy, the discoverer of Shushan, "renders it desirable that the great officers of State receive a title which shall cling to their persons to such an extent as to make their own name forgotten. I meet, under the Achæmenides" (the dynasty to which Xerxes belonged), "the sons, the brothers, the eyes, and the ears of the king. . . . The Parthian sovereigns were treated as 'brothers of the moon, and of the sun;' the Shah himself is saluted by his courtiers as 'Kibla of the Universe' (*Kibla è alem*). The queen-mother, the princesses of the blood, the favourite, have a right to the same favours. The bride of Phraataces I. was described as 'Celestial Goddess.' The favourite

* *Ibid.*, pp. 128, 129.

mistress of Nasser eddin Shah is always designated by her title, 'the Sincere Friend of the State.' . . . The humble 'Myrtle' of Israel is named without doubt 'the Star of the Government.'" Esther's change of name was also, therefore, in keeping with the customs of the place and of the time.

This chapter may fitly close with the following description of the dignity from which Vashti was deposed, and to which Esther was raised. Professor Rawlinson says that of the king's wives "there was always one who held the most exalted place, to whom alone appertained the title of 'queen,' and who was regarded as 'wife' in a different sense from the others. Such was Atossa to Darius Hystaspis, Amestris to Xerxes, Statira to Darius Codomannus. . . . The chief wife, or Queen-Consort, was privileged to wear on her head a royal tiara, or crown. She was the acknowledged head of the female apartments, or Gynæceum, and the concubines recognised her dignity by actual prostration. . . . She had a large revenue of her own assigned her, not so much by the will of her husband, as by an established law or custom. Her dress was splendid, and she was able to indulge freely that love of ornament of which few Oriental women are devoid. . . . The status of the other wives was very inferior to this."*

This enables us to understand what Esther gained and what Vashti lost. The latter was reduced to the position occupied by the wives of the king—one of comfort and of comparative splendour, but with

* *The Five Ancient Monarchies*, vol. iv., pp. 171, 172

nothing of the regal magnificence and almost divine honour which made the queen the one woman of an empire so vast that it might be called the world. Vashti was doubtless at once removed from the central palace in the spacious House of the Women; her retinue was cut down; and the crown, with the other insignia of royalty, was removed from her custody. These last, along with the palace filled with all that unbounded wealth and the arts, then at the very height of their splendour, could supply, awaited the advent of Vashti's successor.

That advent, the Scripture tells us, was celebrated over the entire empire. "The king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, even Esther's feast and he made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts, even according to the state of the king" (ii. 18). Here three things are named as connected with the enthronement of Esther. The "great feast" we have already seen to be a distinctly Persian feature. Was this the case also with the other two? Was it usual for the Persian monarch to call the subject nations to rejoice with him by giving them "a release," and to gratify his nobility by the bestowal of gifts? With us a somewhat contrary custom prevails. A marriage and a coronation are times rather for the receiving of gifts. Does the Scripture, however, present us here with ideas and customs which take us back to the very times of Xerxes and Esther?

The answer will be plain from the following. Herodotus incidentally touches upon this very custom in his notice of the usurper, the false Smerdis, the pre-

decessor upon the Persian throne of Darius the father of Xerxes. The usurper reigned only seven months; but he managed, notwithstanding the extreme shortness of his reign, to endear himself to the empire generally. "His subjects, while his reign lasted," says the Greek historian, "received great benefits from him, insomuch that, when he died, all the dwellers in Asia mourned his loss exceedingly, except only the Persians. For no sooner did he come to the throne than forthwith he sent round to every nation under his rule, and granted them freedom from war-service and from taxes for the space of three years."* Commentators have had difficulty in explaining what the "release" mentioned in the Scripture was; for there was so little within their experience or their knowledge that could throw light upon the term. And now, when we come to the Persia of the very time of which the Bible speaks, the difficulty immediately disappears. The "release" is seen to be a release indeed. The nations are temporarily freed from the immense contributions in men, money, and produce, which formed a constant anxiety to the governors, and which were a constant and heavy drain upon the peoples. It was a simple but effectual means of creating widespread and unfeigned gladness, and of making Esther's name a household word among all the nations.

The answer is equally remarkable with regard to the gifts. Xenophon, who accompanied the younger Cyrus when he attempted to wrest the Persian

* III. 57.

dominion from his brother, with the help of the Greeks, tells us that this very plan of giving gifts was steadily pursued by Cyrus to win and increase the affection of his friends. "As, upon many accounts," he says, "he (Cyrus) received, in my opinion, more presents than any one man; so, of all men living, he distributed them to his friends with the greatest generosity, and in this distribution consulted both the taste and the wants of everyone. And as for those ornaments for his person that were presented to him, either as of use in war, or embellishments to dress, he said . . . that it was not possible for him to wear them all, but that he looked upon a prince's friends, when richly dressed, as his greatest ornament." Xenophon then proceeds to give details to show that in the hands of Cyrus this practice was reduced to a science, and that he outdid all his friends, "not only in the magnificence of his favours," but "also in his care and his earnest desire to oblige."* The same writer also informs us that Cyrus the Great celebrated his first assumption of regal state in the newly-acquired city of Babylon in a similar fashion. He gained the hearts of his commanders, and their friends, and others, and won them to ready obedience and sympathy by the presentation of rich robes. "When he had distributed the finest robes to the greatest men," says Xenophon, "he then produced other robes of the Median sort; for he had provided them in great numbers, and was not sparing either in the purple habits, or those of a dark colour, or in the scarlet, or

* *Anabasis*, i. 9.

in the murrey. And having distributed a certain portion of these to each of the commanders, he bade them adorn and set out their friends with them, 'as I,' he said, 'adorn you.'"^{*} The guards were also treated in the same fashion, and the day of the great ceremony was thus made a day of rejoicing, not so much in the splendour of the robes as in the assurance of the hero's favour. Xerxes, in like manner, carried brightness into the hearts and the homes of his people, and we once more recognise that the Bible sets us down in the very times, and among the scenes which it describes. Those very circumstantial details which draw the critics' scorn prove themselves once more to be a Divine seal to the truth of the Book.

Dr. Driver practically admits that much of the critical case against the Book cannot now be maintained; but, he adds, "it can still hardly be pronounced altogether free from improbabilities;" and the supposed improbability which he places at the head of the now greatly reduced list is this—"Esther cannot, it seems, have been Ahasuerus' *queen*. Between the seventh and the twelfth years of his reign, Xerxes' queen was Amestris, a superstitious and cruel woman (Herodotus vii. 114; ix. 112), who cannot be identified with Esther, and who leaves no place for Esther beside her. . . . Moreover, the manner in which she was selected is in conflict with the law, by which the Persian monarch, in his choice of a queen, was limited to seven noble families of Persia (Herodotus iii. 84)."[†] It is quite true that, if the Greek historians were well

^{*} *Cyrop.* viii. 3. [†] *Introduction*, p. 453.

informed regarding Amestris, she could not have been Esther; and the burying alive of fourteen Persian children in honour of the god of the infernal regions is an act which assuredly could not have been done by a woman who feared the God of Israel. But to accept their testimony as final in the face of the statements of this Book, proved to be a contemporary document of the most minutely correct character, is a course to which no criticism worthy of the name can lend itself. As has been already said, the Greek references to Persian affairs, after Xerxes' return to Persia, are very few. It was a period of interrupted relations with Greece. The old coming and going ceased, and no curious Greek could have entered the territories of an exasperated king and people without deadly peril. The reference to the law, by which Darius and his successors were bound to select his wives from the families of the conspirators who overthrew the false Smerdis, is equally inconclusive, and shows to what straws the critical case is forced to cling. Has Dr. Driver not noticed that Esther's elevation is provided for by a new law, or decree of the king, published throughout the entire kingdom (ii. 2-4)? He ought also, in fairness to his readers, to have mentioned that the Persian king was, in reality, bound by no such law. When Cambyses desired to marry his sister, he inquired of the royal judges, says Herodotus (the very author whom Dr. Driver quotes), whether it was lawful for a brother to marry his sister. They replied that, although they could find no law which permitted such a union, "they had discovered one which enabled

a monarch of Persia to do what he pleased.”* That finding of the supreme legal authority, not very many years before this very time, left the king untrammelled. There was no law to hinder, and no human authority to question the king. And how perfectly the feeling of that time is impressed upon us by the Book of Esther, and how completely out of accord with it is the critical position, may be judged by the following description of the Persian Court: “The feeling of the Persian towards his king is one of which moderns can with difficulty form a conception. In Persia, the monarch was so much the State, that patriotism was, as it were, swallowed up in loyalty; and an absolute unquestioning submission, not only to the deliberate will, but to the merest caprice of the sovereign, was by habit and education so engrained into the nature of the people that a contrary spirit scarcely ever manifested itself. . . . Uncomplaining acquiescence in all the decisions of the monarch—cheerful submission to his will, whatever it might chance to be—characterised the conduct of the Persians in time of peace. . . . The voice of remonstrance, of rebuke, of warning, was unheard at the court; and tyranny was allowed to indulge unchecked in the wildest caprices and extravagances.”† These are the very king and the very Court pictured in *Esther*. Had it been in line with the supposed “historical probabilities” of Dr. Driver and his fellow-critics, it would have been the fiction which, in their ignorance of the times, they imagine it to be. But even as an accurate, and, therefore,

* III. 31. † Rawlinson. *Ancient Monarchies*, vol. iv., pp. 112, 113.

priceless, picture of the times, *Esther* will be valued when they will be forgotten.

CHAPTER X.

MORDECAI AND HAMAN.

A BRIEF account is given in chapter ii. 5, 6 of the genealogy of Mordecai. This is in accordance with the custom of Scripture in presenting us with the story of anyone who becomes the servant of God, and the helper of God's people. We read there: "Now in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite; who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity which had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away."

This passage first suffered somewhat at the hands of the Jews. The name of Kish at once suggested that of Saul, and it was imagined that the aim of the passage was to show that Esther was of royal descent! But if that had been the intention, two things had been strangely neglected. For, first of all, Saul himself might surely have been named; and, secondly, the genealogy might have appeared as that of Esther, and not of Mordecai. But the mention of the name of Agag in the lineage of Haman caused this interpre-

tation to be clung to with increased tenacity. We are told (iii. 1) that Haman was "the son of Hammedatha the Agagite." Here then, on the one side, was the descendant of Saul; and, on the other, the descendant of Agag, the king of Amalek, Israel's inveterate enemy. A lively imagination finds that the identification has a certain charm; but a sober judgment remembers that more is required to establish such an identity than the two words Kish and Agag; that Saul's name does not appear; and that we should also have to conclude that Shimei, who cursed the Lord's anointed, was Saul's brother—a relationship never hitherto suspected, and, indeed, set aside by the Scripture which tells us that he was the son of Gera—and that Mordecai and Esther would, in this case, have descended from Kish, not through Saul, the king of Israel, but through Shimei, the railer upon David! But discovery has shed light which dispels the darkness of these rabbinical fancies. Haman is a purely Persian name. It is read in an inscription, and it appears in Greek under the form of Omanes. Hammedatha, his father's name, is also recognised at once as pure Persian. It means "given by Homa"—"a divinity"—says M. Dieulafoy, "whose worship goes back to a high antiquity in Persia." It has fared quite as badly with the great foundation stone of this Jewish theory which has found such favour with many Christian writers. Agag is the name of a district in the neighbourhood of Media. "It has been long believed," writes M. Oppert, the famous Assyriologist, "that (Haman) was an Amalekite, because one of the

kings of Amalek is called Agag. And seeing that in antiquity the names of Esau and of Amalek were used as designations for the pagans of Europe, the Septuagint translates the Hebrew *Agagi* by 'the Macedonian.' Nevertheless, the name of Haman, as well as that of his father, belongs to the Medo-Persian. We now know, by the inscriptions of Khorsabad, that the country of Agag was really part of Media." Here is the inscription referred to. Sargon, the father of Sennacherib, says in his account of a certain campaign:—

Thirty-four districts of Media I conquered
and I added them to the domain of Assyria; I
imposed upon them an annual tribute of horses.
The country of Agazi (Agag) . . . I ravaged,
I wasted, I burned.

But while Jewish speculation left the authority of the Scripture untouched, so-called Christian scholarship has attempted to lay its honour in the dust. "According to the most natural construction of ii. 5, 6," says De Wette, "Mordecai must have been carried into exile with Jeconiah; consequently, at the time these events took place, he must have been about 120 years old, and Esther must have been a superannuated beauty." * Here would have been one of those inconsistencies into which a romancer falls so easily, and from which few forgers, or writers of historical novels, have managed to escape. But on what, then, we ask, is this grave charge founded? Let the reader kindly mark the reply—*upon a relative pronoun!* In the

* *Eiuleitung*, § 198 a.

words: "Mordecai the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite, who had been carried away," *etc.*, we naturally conclude that the "who" refers to the name which immediately precedes it, and that it was Kish who was carried away. But "no," exclaims De Wette, in the name of outraged Hebrew: "'Who,' can only refer to the principal name in the sentence, and that is Mordecai! It is he who was led captive from Jerusalem in 598 B.C., and who must now, in 495 B.C., have been 103 years in captivity, and, if we say that he was seventeen when he left Jerusalem, will be now 120, while his cousin can not be very much younger." To this it might be replied that "Kish, a Benjamite," is plainly he who is referred to as led away from his native land. The very description, "a Benjamite," makes the reference lie there. He was wrenched away from his inheritance, and therefore it is that his tribe is named. In this way everything is in line with probability and fact. Mordecai and Esther belonged to the fourth generation from the captivity. It might also be shown that this is quite in accord with the Hebrew usage; but it is enough to point out that this argument has been withdrawn. Driver does not mention it, and Davidson is ashamed of it. He says: "This argument, though adduced by De Wette and others, does not appear to be valid. The true explanation of the original words makes Kish, great-grandfather of Mordecai, the person carried away in Jehoiachin's captivity."* But if the argument is not valid, why was it stated and urged

* *Introduction*, vol. ii., p. 159.

with such determination? If the true explanation is in favour of the Bible, why was a false explanation rushed forward like a battering-ram to overthrow faith in the Scripture? It was supported, too, in the name of Hebrew scholarship, and it imposed, on this account, even upon some defenders of the Bible. It is worth remembering, in this warfare, that Hebrew scholarship, when it assaults a Book which the greatest Hebrew scholars the world has ever seen have revered as the Word of God, may indulge in an argument that is "not valid," and, in its haste to destroy, may furnish what has to be afterwards surrendered as not "the true explanation."

Each of these two men fills in turn a great place in the Persian State. There is no mention of Haman among the seven princes, nor in connection with the opening incidents of the history. It was some time after the return of Xerxes from Greece and the marriage of Esther, that Haman was promoted. His promotion is also noted as an innovation. "After these things," we read, "did king Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that were with him. And all the king's servants that were in the king's gate, bowed, and revered Haman: for the king so commanded concerning him" (iii. 1, 2). To this great position Mordecai succeeded. The last words of the book are these which speak of "the greatness of Mordecai, whereunto the king advanced him. . . . For Mordecai the Jew was next unto king Ahasuerus and great among

the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people and speaking peace to all his seed " (x. 2, 3).

Is there any notice of such a great position as this existing in connection with the Persian empire? We have none among the references to Persia left us by the Greek writers; for these references to the time of Xerxes almost entirely cease with the account of the campaign against Greece. They show us the king as the one spring of action and the wielder of all authority in the vast Persian dominion. The inscriptions of the Persian kings, on the other hand, are exceedingly scanty; and, with the exception of those of Darius Hystaspis, comparatively unimportant. It need hardly be said, therefore, that these shed no light upon this matter. But it may be noted that the silence of the Greek writers is so far in complete agreement with the statements of Scripture. Xerxes does not seem to have delegated his authority to any one till this change was made; and it was not made, the Scripture tells us, till some time after the Grecian campaign had ended, and when perhaps the disasters of that conflict called for special activity and careful oversight of the imperial finances. It may be remarked also that, even after the special position is given to Haman, Xerxes is no less king than he had been before. In face of the royal anger, Haman is absolutely without resources. He is crushed like a worm of the dust. There is no popular commotion in consequence of his death, nor the slightest murmur of disaffection. A breath made him, and a breath unmakes him. Xerxes

is as supreme, and as much the one possessor of authority after the elevation of his favourite as he was before.

But it would seem that there must have been some precedent for a State arrangement of this kind; and we naturally ask whether the elevation of a single noble to the supreme administrative power had been customary in the dominions to which Persia had now succeeded? The reader will remember that it was the purpose of Darius the Mede to set Daniel "over the whole realm" (Daniel vi. 2) which led to the deep-laid plot against Daniel's life. Was this, therefore, like the action of Xerxes, a recurrence to a method of government with which these lands had been long familiar? The following from Professor Rawlinson's description of the Assyrian Court sheds welcome light upon this matter. "Among the officers who have free access to the royal person, there is one who stands out with such marked prominence from the rest, that he has been properly recognised as the Grand Vizier, or prime minister—at once the chief counsellor of the monarch, and the man whose special business it was to signify and execute his will. The dress of the Grand Vizier is more rich than that of any other person except the monarch; and there are certain portions of his apparel which he and the king have alone the privilege of wearing. These are principally the tasselled apron and the fringed band depending from the fillet, the former of which is found in the early period only, while the latter belongs to no particular time, but throughout the whole series of

sculptures is the distinctive mark of royal or quasi-royal authority. To these two may be added the long ribbon or scarf, with double streamers at the ends, which depended from, or perhaps fastened, the belt—a royal ornament worn also by the Vizier in at least one representation.”

After a further description of the dress, *etc.*, of the Vizier, Canon Rawlinson concludes: “The pre-eminent rank and dignity of this officer is shown, not only by his participation in the insignia of royal authority, but also and very clearly by the fact, that, when he is present, no one ever intervenes between him and the king. He has the undisputed right of precedence, so that he is evidently the first subject of the crown. He, and he alone, is seen addressing the monarch. He does not always accompany the king on his military expeditions; but, when he attends them, he still maintains his position, having a dignity greater than any general, and so taking the entire direction of the prisoners and of the spoil.”*

It was, consequently, no new and unheard of thing to raise a subject to such a lofty pinnacle of power. It was merely the continuation of an office which even the strong autocrats of Assyria had found to be necessary; and it is not a matter for astonishment that Xerxes, after his early vigour had fled, and when the disasters of the Grecian campaign had called for renewed activity, fell back upon a custom which relieved the king of labour, while it in no wise diminished his authority.

* *The Five Great Monarchies*, vol. ii., pp. 115-117.

CHAPTER XI.

HAMAN'S REVENGE.

IT has not been sufficiently noticed that Mordecai was evidently engaged in the service of the Court. When he is first mentioned (ii. 5), we are told that he was resident in "Shushan the Palace." But no one, who was not connected more or less directly with the royal service, could have been permitted to reside within those jealously guarded precincts. Apparently, between the arrival of the first section of the maidens brought into the house of the women and the coming of those from the more distant provinces, a change had been made in the position of Mordecai. "When the virgins were gathered together the second time, then Mordecai sat in the king's gate" (ii. 19). This "sitting in the king's gate" was plainly a matter of daily duty, and was due neither to choice on the part of Mordecai, nor to a spirit of bold intrusion. He was there on the king's service; for otherwise the palace guards would have summarily punished him, or have swept him aside, on his refusal to obey the king's commandment in the honouring of Haman. It was plainly some post also of considerable, though no doubt minor, authority. There is no one at the gate with power enough to punish or to suspend him.

The Divine honours paid to the new favourite

were such as the God-fearing Jew could not render. He had explained, when his fellow-officials remonstrated with him, that he was an Israelite, and could not therefore yield to man what was due to God alone. The refusal was too marked, however, and perhaps the love of intrigue was too keen, for them to permit the matter to rest there. Haman's attention was directed to it. "Now it came to pass, when they spake daily unto him, and he hearkened not unto them, that they told Haman, to see whether Mordecai's matters would stand: for he had told them that he was a Jew. And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath" (iii. 4, 5).

Haman's indignation at the affront daily given to him could not be appeased by the death of Mordecai alone. The Grand Vizier's eye swept over the millions whom the king had now placed under his control. He recognised that those Jews, peculiar, prejudiced, intractable, were everywhere. This was not a solitary instance of trouble. He would deal with the Mordecai of the empire, and would rid the world once for all of what he now recognised as an intolerable nuisance. He believed he had only to let loose the animosity, which they had excited everywhere among the idolatrous populations of the widespread Persian dominion, and the Jew would become merely a fast fading memory. The publication of an edict from Pekin could exterminate the Christians in China without the use of a single regiment of the Chinese army; and, in ancient Persia, a universal

massacre of the Jews required only the intimation of the royal will. Even in Palestine there was not a neighbouring nation or tribe that would not have rushed to accomplish all that Haman, in the moment of his fiercest passion, had desired. The fearful work would have been thoroughly and gleefully done.

But he was statesman enough to foresee one objection to his plan. The royal revenues might suffer. He had an answer as we shall see, to that. There was something else, however, which had to be seen to before he could ask for a royal decree. For that decree must fix the date—and to prevent the possibility of escape of any Jew by his removing from one district to another, it must be the same date for the whole empire. Haman, therefore, first of all, calls his priests together to fix a fortunate day for this huge undertaking; and so “in the first month, that is, the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of king Ahasuerus, they cast Pur, that is, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar” (iii. 7). Having determined the fortunate day, which is afterwards named in the decree, he approached the king. The Vizier presents his case with skill. Not a word is said about Mordecai, nor of any private end that Haman has to serve. As becomes his great position, he is occupied only with the king's interests and with the welfare of the empire. “And Haman said unto king Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the

provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws: therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them" (verse 8). He asks that they may be exterminated, and he offers to pay 10,000 talents of silver to make good any loss of revenue that may be feared. The king's favour for Haman was too new and too strong to admit of hesitation. Permission was instantly granted. The king's signet was confided to the Vizier, the secretaries were summoned, and the couriers swept out from Shushan the Palace to carry the royal commands to the utmost limits of the empire that the Jews should perish everywhere, "both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to take the spoil of them for a prey" (iii. 13).

This part of the narrative has specially attracted the critical fire. Davidson puts some of these objections in their mildest form. He says that the determination to slay two millions of people, the king's agreeing to the request of Haman, and the latter's offer of 10,000 talents of silver, or nearly three and a-half millions sterling, are "somewhat incredible on the part of the king and the Prime Minister."* It has been pointed out, in reply, that here the critics, as usual, fall into a very obvious trap. They judge a narrative of the past by the ideas and the practices of the present. Such massacres were not unknown to Persian history, and were not regarded

* *Introduction*, vol. ii., p. 402.

then as they are regarded to-day. Every reader of Xenophon will recall the massacre of the Grecian generals, invited by the Persian commander to a banquet. But such an act was even then no new thing in Persian history. There were two outstanding deeds of the kind which had been done heartily and thoroughly, and which prove that to the public mind the idea of such an atrocity was neither unusual, abhorrent, nor unwelcome. "The dominion of the Scythians over Asia," writes Herodotus, "lasted eight and twenty years, during which time their insolence and oppression spread ruin on every side. For besides the regular tribute, they exacted from the several nations additional imposts, which they fixed at pleasure; and further, they scoured the country, and plundered everyone of whatever they could. At length Cyaxares and the Medes invited the greater part of them to a banquet, and made them drunk with wine, after which they were all massacred. The Medes then recovered their empire, and had the same extent of dominion as before." *

That event lived in the memories of the Persian people, and a similar, but much more recent, massacre was ever viewed by them with special satisfaction. The path to the throne trod by Darius, the father of Xerxes, had been paved with bloodshed. When he assassinated the Magus, who had seized the throne, there fell with the Magus a number of his chief adherents. "Nor," says Rawlinson, "did the vengeance of the successful conspirators stop here.

* I. 106.

Speeding to the capital, with the head of the Magus in their hands, and exhibiting everywhere this proof at once of the death of the late king, and of his imposture, they proceeded to authorise, and aid in carrying out, a general massacre of the Magian priests, the abettors of the late usurpation. Every Magus who could be found was poniarded by the enraged Persians; and the caste would have been well-nigh exterminated if it had not been for the approach of night. Darkness brought the carnage to an end; and the sword, once sheathed, was not again drawn. Only, to complete the punishment of the ambitious religionists who had insulted and deceived the nation, the day of the massacre was appointed to be kept annually as a solemn festival, under the name of the Magophonia: and a law was passed that on that day no Magian should leave his house." *

Herodotus says (III. 79) that such was the fury of the Persians "that, unless night had closed in, not a single Magus would have been left alive." We can now perceive where Haman got his idea, and how the suggestion awakened no aversion in the mind of Xerxes, nor the decree among the Persian people. We are also able to appreciate one feature of the history, which seems to have quite escaped the notice of commentators. *The massacre of the Jews is fixed for one day.* It is not to begin before the 13th day of Adar: it is not to continue after. When we remember that Haman aims at the complete extirpation of the Jews, we are the more astonished at the

* *Ancient Monarchies*, vol. 4, p. 402.

limitation. What can it mean? It means that *Esther* is history. The massacre was limited by precedent—a precedent possibly older than Darius. The Bible says nothing about previous massacres. It does not explain the limitation. It keeps to a simple and clear statement of the facts. But when, as here, we are able to go back into the times, we find not only that its statements are confirmed: they are also illustrated and explained. The Persians seem to have been, beyond every other ancient people, tenacious of precedent. They were tenacious of it even here. A massacre might last for a day, but the sword returned to its sheath at nightfall.

The objection, urged on the ground of Haman's offer of a sum amounting to about three and a-half millions sterling of our money, is based upon similar ignorance of the times. It is apparently suggested that such a sum must have been vastly beyond the means even of a favoured subject; but we fortunately possess the record of an incident in this very king's reign, which shows that the possession of vast fortunes by private persons was by no means "incredible." While passing through Phrygia, on his way to Greece, "a man named Pythias, son of Atys, a native of Lydia," says Herodotus, "entertained Xerxes and all his army with great magnificence; he further engaged to supply the king with money for the war." He offered Xerxes about five and a-half millions sterling, saying that his slaves and his farms were quite sufficient to support him. "'My Lydian friend,' returned Xerxes, much delighted, 'since I

first left Persia you are the only person who has treated my army with hospitality, or who, appearing in my presence, has voluntarily offered me a supply for the war; you have done both; in acknowledgment for which I offer you my friendship.'” He then, besides restoring to him the money, supplied a sum which made his fortune still greater, and accompanied the gift with the words: “Retain, therefore, and enjoy, your property; persevere in your present mode of conduct, which will invariably operate to your happiness.”* Here we have, so far as the offered gift is concerned, an exactly similar incident. Haman’s gift is returned to him in the same kingly fashion. The very hugeness of the offer has left Xerxes no possibility of aught but a pleased and generous response. The emotions of the monarch leave no room for cautious inquiry, or for deliberate consideration of Haman’s request. The request, so accompanied, has made Haman more than ever the king’s friend; “and the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman, the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the Jews’ enemy. And the king said unto Haman, the silver is given to thee, the people also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee” (iii. 10, 11). Do we not here meet the very man with whom Pythias the Lydian talked in Phrygia?

But if the critics have any call to speak in regard to these matters, they are fully within their rights when they object to the Book on the ground of

* VII. 28, 29.

language. There, their special studies give them an undoubted claim to be heard. Dr. Driver writes: "Whether the word 'Purim' is rightly explained (ix. 26) is open to doubt. . . . No Persian word resembling *Pur*, with the meaning 'lot,' is known to exist." But, having said so much, Dr. Driver was bound to have said more. He should surely have told his readers that our knowledge of the ancient Persian is extremely limited, being confined to the words which occur upon the few Persian monuments which have survived the destruction of ages. He might also have added, that the testimony of the related languages supports the statement of the Scripture. "*Purim* itself," says Colonel Conder, "is an Aryan word connected with the root whence the Latin *fors* is derived."* "*Pur*, or *Purim*," writes M. Dieulafoy. "is not a Persian word, argues the rationalistic school, and does not signify 'lot,' as the Bible insists, in any language, nor in any known dialect. It would be more exact to insist that *pur* does not appear in the very limited dictionary composed according to the inscriptions of the Achæmenides at Behistun, Nakshi-Rustem, and Persepolis; for the word, considered in itself, is one of the best known and most clearly defined roots in the Aryan languages. *Par* in Sanscrit, *Por* in Persian, *plere* in Latin, *plein* in French, correspond to the same idea, and hand on the same sense to their derivatives. Is this sense adapted to the name given to the festival?

"I borrow from the Bible itself the definition of

* *The Bible and the East*, p. 193.

the word *Pur*. Before sacrificing the Jews to his vengeance Haman requests the diviners to fix a day for the massacre: 'In the first month, which is the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of the king (Ahasuerus), they threw *pur*—that is, the lot—in the presence of Haman, day for day, month for month, even to the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar.'

"The phrase is involved in no obscurity, if one keeps to the literal sense. They use a prophetic instrument called *pur* in the Persian tongue, which is thrown before any one wishing to obtain the counsel of destiny. The *pur* doubtless gave its responses by 'yes' and by 'no.' It had to reply to a clearly defined question, placed before it in a two-fold fashion, 'Will the Jews be massacred on the first day of the month?' We know that when consulted day for day, month for month, the *pur* gave at first a negative reply, then, when one called out the thirteenth day and the twelfth month it replied 'yes;' that is to say, 'kill.'

"Among the objects found in the deep excavations of 'Shushan the Palace,' was a quadrangular prism, three-eighths of an inch broad and one inch and three-quarters in height. On the four sides the following numbers appear in points: 1—2—5—6. Throw down the prism and it will be forcibly arrested on a number that is either odd or even.

"The Persians were as fond of games of chance as of wine. Is not this small Susian relic one of their dice; and have they not used their dice, under the

name of *pur*, for consulting the lot and trying their fortune? *Pur* has not, properly, any more than cards, urns, or dice, the sense of 'lot;' but all these words enter into the similar phrases—to cast the *pur*, to draw the cards, to put the hand in the urn, to throw the dice, which awaken the same idea—to consult the lot. The Persian expression, *pur*—literally, 'full,' 'solid'—even corresponds in a certain measure to the shape of the Archæmenian dice." *

This may possibly be the origin of the phrase. The belief also in lucky and unlucky months and days had long taken deep root in that region, and in a matter of this kind the day and the month had to be fixed, not in accordance with Haman's convenience, nor by any such considerations as avail with ourselves to-day, but by the decree of the gods, without whose approval he believed the design would meet with no success. Here, therefore, in this part of the history, so confidently challenged, we find everything still in closest agreement with the place and the time.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ROYAL DECREE.

AS soon as the king's consent was obtained, the decree was issued. The empire was wide, extending from Ethiopia to India, and time was needed to make the tidings known, and to permit of adequate

* *L'Acropole de Suse*, pp. 362, 363.

preparation. Besides, Haman's thirst for vengeance had an immediate satisfaction in the consternation and terror that fell upon this hated race wherever the decree was published. These considerations seem to have quite escaped the critics, straining every nerve to secure a verdict against this Book. They add, too, that such long notice would have defeated Haman's object, as it would have permitted the Jews to flee. Where could they have fled to? It is perhaps possible that they might have thought of Greece, which had just successfully resisted the arms of Xerxes. But was there the slightest possibility of their making their way through the intervening provinces, the entire population of which were aware of their approaching fate, and would at once have divined their purpose?

Details, however, are given not only of the time when the decree was issued and of the day when it fell to be executed, but also of the manner in which it was published. We pass, with the writer, into the government offices of Shushan. We note how copies of the royal edict are prepared, how they are attested, and how they are forwarded to their destinations. We are shown the royal Secretariat and the postal service. Are these the actual institutions of the time; or is this a picture painted by an imaginative Jewish writer about two centuries after the Persian monarchy and its institutions had been swept away? These are questions by which the critical case against this Book must stand or fall. Let us once more note the verdict of history.

We are told that Haman at once summons "the king's scribes"—"Then were the king's scribes called on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, and there was written according to all that Haman had commanded" (iii. 12). We know that the royal Secretariat was not only a Persian institution, but that it was also a distinctive mark of this very time. Xerxes, wherever he went, was accompanied by his scribes. They attracted the attention of the Greeks amid all the magnificence and all the terrors of his great invasion of their territory. Herodotus says that "Xerxes, having ranged and numbered his armament, was desirous to take a survey of them all. Mounted in his car, he examined each nation in their turn. To all of them he proposed certain questions, the replies to which were noted down by his secretaries."* And again: "The king," that is, Xerxes, "placed on Mount Aegaleos, which is opposite to Salamis, was particularly observant of the battle, and when he saw any person eminently distinguish himself, he was minute in his enquiries concerning his family and city; all of which, at his direction, his scribes recorded."†

Here, then, we once more have beneath us the solid ground of history, and not the illusions of fiction. Nöldeke is particularly severe upon another part of this account. "It is still harder to believe," he says, "that royal edicts were issued in the language and writing of each one of the numerous peoples who inhabited the empire." One is strongly inclined to

* VII. 100.

† VIII. 90.

ask him in what manner he thinks the inhabitants could have been communicated with, if not through the medium of the only language which they were able to understand? Perhaps the answer would be that the work of translation would be left with right royal indifference to the governors or to other local authorities. But, had that been the representation in Esther, we can imagine with what a note of triumph the critics would have swooped down upon it. They would, doubtless, have reminded us that this was supremely improbable, in view of the highly-organised system adopted by the Persian government; and we should have been asked whether important decrees were likely to be left to the possible blundering of provincial translators, imperfectly acquainted with the Persian tongue. But this is not the representation of the Book. Just as in India the British Government has its highly paid official translators, so were these provided and constantly employed in Persia. Even the monuments in Xerxes' own palaces bore inscriptions in three languages—the Persian, the Susian, and the Assyrian. The reader will also note how the accuracy of the Scripture is revealed in the two phrases which tell us that the decree was sent to the rulers of every province “according to the writing thereof,” and to every people “after their language” (iii. 12). The peoples differed in language, but the differences did not end there. The alphabet, and other characters and signs, which made up the writing systems of the nations, were different. Thus there were three different kinds of writing, as well as three

languages, upon Xerxes' own home monuments. There were, besides, in the provinces the hieroglyphs of Egypt, the Hebrew alphabet of Syria and Phœnicia, the Greek alphabet, the yet unread Hittite character, etc. A writer, with the times fully before him, would naturally record this two-fold difference. Professor Nöldeke's objection shows how readily a late writer would omit any mention of it.

Another slight, but significant, phrase tells the same story. It is said of the decree: "In the name of king Ahasuerus was it written, and sealed with the king's ring," or with the king's seal (iii. 12). That is, the letters were not signed by the hand of Ahasuerus. They were authenticated as from him, not by a signature, but by a seal. This method of certifying the royal decrees is also indicated when we are told that the king "took his ring (signet) from his hand, and gave it unto Haman the son of Hammedatha" (verse 10). But was this the practice of the kings of this dynasty? Did they seal, and not sign, their documents? Recent research in Persia has again confirmed the Scripture. That this was the custom of the monarchs of this very dynasty is proved by the discovery of some of their seals. The seal, for example, of Darius, the father of Xerxes, has been found. It bears the figure of the king shooting arrows at a lion. This is accompanied by an inscription in Persian, Susian, and Assyrian: "I, Darius, great king."

The letters were sent off by "posts;" literally, "by the hand of the runners" (verse 13). This implies that there was a regularly organised postal service.

Certain men are spoken of here as set apart for this work. It is their sole, and their universally recognised, duty. They are spoken of as "the runners." When we once more ask whether this was indeed a Persian institution, and one which characterised this very reign, the reply is that it was one of its most distinguishing characteristics. Speaking of a despatch sent from Greece to Persia by this very monarch, Herodotus says: "The Persian messengers travel with a velocity which nothing human can equal. It is thus accomplished: as many days as are required to go from one place to another, so many men and horses are regularly stationed along the road, allowing a man and a horse for each day; neither snow, nor rain, nor heat, nor darkness, are permitted to obstruct their speed. The first messenger delivers his business to the second, the second to the third, as the torch is handed among the Greeks at the feast of Vulcan." These expressions, which occur so naturally, and yet come in so incidentally, are among the most convincing proofs that the writer lived and moved among the scenes which he describes. A late writer might, if well informed, easily mention practices and customs belonging to the times of Xerxes and of Esther; but it would be impossible for him to have his phrases shaped and moulded by the Persia of that very time. To have been influenced to such an extent by the Persia of Xerxes, he must have lived in it, and been of it.

CHAPTER XIII.

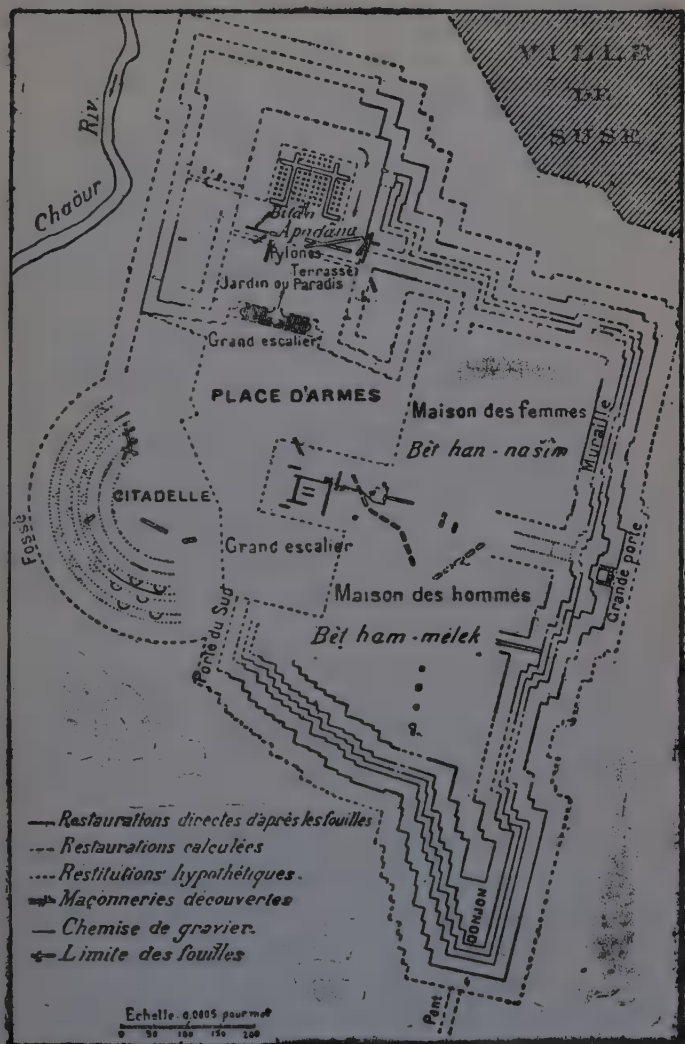
THE DELIVERANCE OF THE JEWS.

PROF. NÖLDEKE says: "That Mordecai is able to communicate freely with his niece in the harem must be pronounced altogether contrary to the usage of Oriental courts." One is frequently amazed at the methods of the higher criticism; and I must confess that the above astonishes me. It takes for granted—for the statement is made without one word of explanation or of argument—that Mordecai *did* "communicate freely with his niece in the harem." But that is surely one of the last impressions which the Book would make upon the mind of any ordinary reader. The facts, stated clearly, show that, on the contrary, he had considerable difficulty in communicating with Esther. He was plainly engaged, as has been said, in the palace; and he was able, consequently, to have access to the outer courts. But, when Esther is removed from under his roof, he does once see her again so far as the Book informs us. We read that, at first, "he walked every day before the court of the women's house, to know how Esther did, and what should become of her" (ii. 11). The singularity of his action, though he made no attempt to intrude into the part of the palace grounds assigned to the women, would naturally attract the attention of the lynx-eyed guardians of that special domain; and,

as Mordecai doubtless expected, he would be asked for an explanation. Then would come his inquiry. It was perfectly natural that, in a levy such as had just been made, the young women should have left many attached friends behind them, who anxiously desired some tidings of them. These would be more readily given to a palace official. It has been suggested that in this way Mordecai must have betrayed his relationship to Esther, and brought about the very revelation which he had warned her to guard against. We may be certain, however, that he who gave that counsel would keep his own, and that there would be nothing in his inquiries to suggest the nearness of the tie that bound him to her.

When a channel of communication once was found, it was used to convey to Esther the news of the palace conspiracy, and to save the king's life; but that Mordecai's means of communication were still of a most restricted character is plain from his action when the decree to exterminate the Jews was issued. He rent his clothes, and went out of the palace to the city without even warning Esther of the common peril. He has to present himself in his mourning before the king's gate to attract the attention of the inmates of the palace. The later excavations of the ruins of Susa have enabled M. Dieulafoy to trace the walls more fully, and to discover a gate upon the east side of the walls. This is shown in a plan borrowed from his work. This gate communicated with the city on the east, and was close to the house of the women. Here Mordecai appeared attracting the

attention of the watchers and of the attendants upon



the queen. There was no direct intercourse; and,

even in this supreme moment, there was no intercourse whatever till Esther herself, through the eunuch who specially waited upon her, sent to inquire the cause of Mordecai's grief.

There is, therefore, no "free communication" whatever in the Book, and that representation belongs entirely to the bundle of critical fictions which Prof. Nöldeke and his kind are endeavouring to substitute for the Word of God. It may be asked, however, whether even the restricted intercourse, which the Scripture records, was possible. The narrative of Herodotus has left us in no doubt upon this point. One of the conspirators, who assisted Darius to slay the false Smerdis, was Otanes. This nobleman had a daughter in the very same position as Esther. He and his fellow-conspirators desired to make sure as to the identity of the usurper, and Otanes had messages conveyed to her, and received replies which were of the greatest assistance to them in assuring them that the king was an impostor. And yet they seem to have had no friends among those who surrounded the king's person. They had to adventure their own lives, and to fight their way into the king's presence.*

Another objection urged by Nöldeke is "that the queen is represented as unable to send even a message to her husband," and he says this has been imported into the narrative "in order that the writer may have an opportunity of magnifying the courage of his heroine;" and he adds: "Such restrictions, it is

* III. 68, 69.

needless to say, there can never have been in reality." It will be admitted by every one that, judged by our western ideas, Esther's inability to enter the king's presence, or to send a message to him requesting an audience, has a most improbable look. But it will be equally plain that, if the customs of the Persian Court were really what they are here said to have been, this fact will tell the more strongly in favour of the Book. For the very hugeness of the improbability would have effectually prevented any romancer, who desired his work to pass as history, from introducing any feature of the kind. What, then, are the facts? "The whole ceremonial of the Court," says Rawlinson, "seems to have been imposing. Under ordinary circumstances the monarch kept himself secluded, and no one could obtain admission to him unless he formally requested an audience, and was introduced into the royal presence by the proper officer. On his admission he prostrated himself upon the ground, with the same sign of adoration which were made on entering a temple. The king, surrounded by his attendants, eunuchs, and others, maintained a haughty reserve, and the stranger only beheld him from a distance."* "The Persian monarchs," says another writer, "were under no control, but governed by their own arbitrary will and pleasure. They were revered by their subjects like deities on earth, none daring to appear before their throne without prostrating themselves on the ground, with a kind of adoration. . . . While they were in

* *Ancient Monarchies*, vol. iii., p. 88.

the king's presence they were to hold their hands, so long as the audience lasted, within their sleeves; for neglecting this ceremony, Autosaces and Mitræus were put to death, as we read in Xenophon, by Cyrus the younger." *

It will be observed that even Haman cannot enter the king's presence at will. He has to wait in the outer court till the king invites him to enter the more sacred precincts. Into the House of the King evidently no one dares penetrate unless upon the distinct invitation of the monarch. And the privilege given to the representatives of the seven conspirators is eloquent of the same scrupulous restrictions. Had it not been a thing of such an outstanding kind, it would not have been fixed upon as a distinctive mark of the honour due to the men who risked everything to save their country. It may be added, too, that, when we read the account in Herodotus of the appeals by Otanes, one of the noblest of the conspirators, to the inmates of the royal harem, we feel ourselves to be in the very atmosphere of the Book of Esther. "Otanes," he says, "was one of the first rank of the Persians, both with regard to birth and affluence. This nobleman was the first who suspected that this was not Smerdis, the son of Cyrus; and was induced to suppose who he really was, from his never quitting the citadel, and from his not inviting any of the nobles to his presence." Now, if one asks why he did not himself enter the royal presence and make sure whether this was, or was not, Smerdis, an

* *Antient History*, vol. v., p. 120.

answer will be found in the fact that the idea never occurs to Herodotus. And why does it not occur to him? For the simple reason that such an intrusion would have been a crime. It may be supposed, however, that he might have done, as Prof. Nöldeke thinks Esther should have done. He might have requested an interview. But neither does this occur to either Otanes or Herodotus; and that, apparently, for the reason that for a resident in the country to have thrust himself in this way upon the king would have been nearly as flagrant an insult to the royal dignity as to have entered the House of the King uninvited. If Otanes was suffering from wrong inflicted by any one, or had a proposal of any kind to make, there were appointed channels through which he might obtain satisfaction; but the king's door opened only at the spontaneous will and desire of the king himself.

But let us follow Herodotus's story. Otanes, he tells us, sent a message to his daughter to ask her to speak to Atossa, the sister of the real Smerdis, and another of the wives of the usurper. She replied: "I can neither speak to Atossa, nor indeed see any of the women that live with him. Since this person, whoever he is, came to the throne, the women are all kept separate." She might, indeed, according to our ideas, have tried to get to Atossa, or, at least, to open communication with her, but that idea does not apparently occur to any of the parties concerned; but why? Simply because to have made the attempt would have been to try to defeat the intentions of the king. When at last the daughter of Otanes resolves

to make the attempt to identify the king, she does it in the very spirit of Esther, taking her life in her hands. What she was asked to do was to ascertain whether the king had ears, the Magian, whom Otanes suspected of usurping the throne, having been deprived of his ears by Cambyses. "To this," says Herodotus, "Phædyma replied: 'That she would obey him, notwithstanding the danger she incurred; being well assured, that if he had no ears, and should discover her in endeavouring to know this, she should instantly be put to death.' " Here we have the very Court in which Esther moves. The messages of Mordecai to Esther are an exact parallel to those of Otanes to his daughter; and the evident explanation of this is that the same court regulations are confronting each of the women whose interference is requested.

We read that "on the third day Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king's house" (v. 1). She had evidently devoted three days to a solemn fast before taking her life in her hand and trying to save her people. The reader will note how minute the Scripture here is in its descriptions; and it is to this minuteness of description that we owe our ability to show that this Book is history, and not fiction. Esther proceeds from the House of the Women to the inner court of the King's House. How she is enabled to do this, and still to keep within the private precincts of the palace, becomes plain the moment we glance at the plan of the now fully-explored buildings. It will be

noticed (see page 353) that a wide corridor leads down from the House of the Women on the north to the House of the King on the south. This corridor joins the House of the Women to the Inner Court of the King's House, so that this was the first place which Esther could reach. Here she stood and waited, uniting modesty and meek submission with her boldness. She "stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the gate of the house" (v. 1).

To understand her position and purpose we have to look once more at the plan. At the south end of the King's House there is a large Hall, the king's reception room, and through whose gates apparently entrance is had to the King's House. The throne is in the centre of the southern wall, and from that elevated seat the king, looking over an intermediate screen, sees right across the court towards the corridor. It was impossible that Esther should escape his notice. It was a moment in which Esther's fate hung in the balance; for the result of that surprised recognition depended on the king's mood. The signal is given which indicates that the intrusion is viewed with pleasure and not with anger. The sceptre, which the king holds in his right hand, is raised. It is a token which the courtiers know well. Esther is invited to approach, and is escorted into the royal presence. It is evident that she has come to present some request, and with feminine tact that was never more essential and priceless, she entreats the presence

of the king and his vizier to a banquet which she has prepared in her own palace. Asked at that feast what her request may be, she begs his and Haman's presence at a similar feast upon the morrow. She is dealing with matters of life and death—handling weapons of fatal sharpness—and one ill-considered movement may be the destruction of herself and of her people. The king's desire to serve her will be deepened by this repeated pleasure on which, we may well believe, all the arts of the court were lavished. Made to know her in this repeated, and very probably unwonted, intercourse, the king will insensibly be drawn to her side, and the ardent sympathy of a fresh affection will prepare him to break with his trusted favourite and to reward him according to his deeds. Haman's presence will complete the preparations, for it puts aside the peril of delay if Haman had to be sought for and brought into the royal presence. The culprit's confusion and the king's fierce anger will seal the doom of her nation's foe.

It is needless to point out how all these details complete the proof to which we have been listening in these chapters. There is no narrative in human literature that conveys more fully to a reader's mind and heart the impression that he is in contact with reality; and the ancient palace that was the scene of this eventful drama has come back from a long buried past to witness to the absolute correctness even of its minute details. Here, as everywhere besides, discovery which has got back to the times, the scenes, and the events of which the Bible speaks, witnesses

to its truth, and turns into foolishness the theories and the contentions of an unbelieving and ignorant criticism.

THE PROPHET ISAIAH.

THERE are many bright stars amid the glory of that cloud of witnesses which proclaim the might of faith and the unfailing help of God. It is only when we recall those names, and remember that there were multitudes like them of whom no earthly record exists, that we see that the Old Dispensation was not the failure which we are, sometimes at least, inclined to think it was. It failed only as Christianity fails to-day—through unbelief. The multitudes were idolatrous or indifferent; but there was ever a remnant that tasted and saw that God is good. To-day the Cross has no attraction for the crowd. Its gifts are not the good they seek. But there are, nevertheless, those in every generation who hear Christ's voice, who turn and receive Him, and receive with Him the power to become the sons of God. These have been the glory of humanity in all the past ages of the new era. We feel, as we look on them, that God has not made all men in vain. And those in the old era are its glory likewise. They join hands with the men of the Christian centuries. They form with them the glorious brotherhood that binds together the ages, and that links earth with heaven.

Among those luminaries no one can fail to reckon Isaiah. He ranks with Moses, Joshua, Samuel,

David, Elijah, and Elisha. We know little of the man; for, as with other writers of the Scripture, neither he nor his personal concerns are obtruded upon our notice. We have to search for hints and indications; and it is only when we have pondered these that the manner of the man is revealed to us. He must have entered upon his prophetic service early, for his was almost a life-long ministry. In this he resembles Jeremiah and Daniel, whose service began in their youth. No one can fail to notice the deep devotion, the whole-hearted consecration, and the richly endowed nature of the man. We learn that he was married, and the names of some of his children are told us. It is plain also that, though despised and easily set aside in the days of Ahaz, in the time of Hezekiah, that king's son, there is no more revered personality in the kingdom than Isaiah. All this is revealed in the Book, and we know nothing more. When we turn from the Scripture, and question the people among whose fathers he lived and ministered, we find that they can give us no information. Isaiah was one of the greatest personalities of his time; but tradition has, nevertheless, absolutely nothing to say. And this can surprise us only if we have never questioned our own national experiences. Some among the personalities of a bygone age have been fortunate enough to secure an early record, and they have come down to our day through that record alone. But of the rest who found no record what remains? The nation's memory is a blank. Apart from contemporary, or

nearly contemporary-references, what has tradition handed down of Warwick the King-maker, of Wiclif, of Spenser, or Raleigh, or Bacon, or even of John Knox? Absolutely nothing. The present knows them not. It puts its foot, in utter unconsciousness, upon the very spot where their feet rested. Tradition is supposed by the critics to be a river flowing down through the ages, and receiving along its broadening and deepening course contributory streams from the memories of every generation. But this is as sheer fiction as those other critical imaginations J E, P, D, and the rest of the phantom substitutes for the despised Spirit of God and His rejected servants. Tradition is not a "source." The deeds, the sayings, the strivings, and the services of men, as far as tradition is concerned, are like water spilled upon the ground that cannot be gathered up again.

The Jewish rabbis were ready, however, to make up for the deficiencies of tradition with their inventions. Jerome hands on, for instance, a report, received from his Hebrew teachers, that Isaiah gave his daughter in marriage to Manasseh king of Judah. Some say that he himself belonged to the royal house, his father being brother to king Amaziah. Others affirm that his father was a prophet, and Amos the prophet and Amoz (*Amotz*) the father of Isaiah have been confounded together, although their names are spelled differently in Hebrew. Perhaps there may be some comfort in the suggestion that the alleged tradition of his having been sawn asunder has quite as little to support it. When Manasseh, the supposed

murderer of the prophet, ascended the throne, Isaiah was probably beyond his reach. The period of his service ended with the reign of Manasseh's father Hezekiah (see I. 1); and we can well believe that Isaiah's service ended only with his life. One Jewish doctor, Kimchi, was bold enough to lay down the traditions, and to acknowledge that nothing was known of the prophet beyond what is to be learned from the Scriptures. "We know not his race," he said, "nor of what tribe he was."

The prophet's ministry is admitted to have been one of unusual duration. The vision in chapter vi. is dated "in the year that king Uzziah died;" and it was to Isaiah that Hezekiah, not long before the end of his reign, sent for direction when Sennacherib's army threatened Jerusalem. If we suppose that his ministry began in the fifth last year of Uzziah, we reach the following result:

Uzziah	...	...	5
Jotham	...	...	16
Ahaz...	...	...	16
Hezekiah	...	...	29
			—
			66

His prophetic work would, therefore, have continued for the long period of nearly sixty-six years. In so prolonged an extension of one man's service there must have been more than what one might describe as the happy chance of a long life. In the Divine arrangements there are no chances. Can we, then, discern any purpose in it? The period in which the

prophet served and the character of his work suggest an evident answer. Isaiah is the Moses of Israel's new era. Hitherto God's people, as a people, have declined to treat His purpose seriously. He has chosen them to be the priests, the spiritual leaders, and the ministers of the nations. Their only desire, on the other hand, has been to be as the nations. They lived the Gentiles' life. They had ever been fatally ready to conform to the Gentile worship. These manners God had winked at. The Lord does not willingly afflict nor grieve the children of men; and the stroke of final judgment had been long delayed. But now the time was come; and in order that God's people may be guided, and that even the darkest heart may understand, the prophet called for by the time was provided, and his ministry was so prolonged and so glorious as to challenge and to fix the attention of generations.

The reader will recall the outburst of prophetic activity among the ten tribes. Just before God began to deal with them in judgment, Elijah and Elisha were raised up. And now it will be noticed that almost the whole of Jewish prophetic activity is centred upon this part of Jewish history. God's people are to be cast into the furnace that their dross may be purged, and the true gold alone remain; and that this work may be done the coming trial is foretold. No room is left for doubt as to whether it is from God's hand or not. The sin for which it is sent is also manifested. But Judah is not to be cast away. The banishment is not for ever; and the

limits set by Him who in wrath remembers mercy are disclosed. Consolation and assurance are stored up for them in their affliction, and the glories of that future for which God is preparing them, and for which He will prepare the whole earth, are unveiled. And at the head of those who thus prepare God's people for the coming days of trial, and who furnish light for their returning feet, is Isaiah. He has been happily compared with the Apostle Paul. To Isaiah in the Old Dispensation, and to Paul in the New has it been given to unfold God's counsel in all its fulness, and to enrich the Church with the Divine consolations.

Our space prevents my entering now upon the questions which have been raised regarding the Book, which perpetuates the great prophet's ministry. To our next volume, therefore, it must be left to ask whether there are "two Isaiahs," and to notice what recent research has to say upon that and other matters pertaining to this great inheritance of the Church of God.

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